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Home Front, U.S.A.

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THE WEEK BEFORE PEARL HARBOR
THE GREAT WAR AT SEA

Home Front, U.S.A.

A. A. HOEHLING

THOMAS Y. CROWELL COMPANY

New York · Established 1834

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**Dedicated to my long suffering wife, Mary,
commander in chief of her sector of the home front
during the author's absence on Navy duty.**

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Because of the national nature of this book, a seemingly infinite number of newspapers, especially weeklies and small dailies in all of the states were consulted for the local "angles" and moods of the times. A listing would be in itself an N. W. Ayer's Directory in capsule. For the over-all picture the usual standbys were again indispensable, led by *The New York Times*—with its historian's bible, the yearly index—and including the *Baltimore Sun*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Christian Science Monitor*, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, and *Washington Post*.

By the same token, quantities of periodicals were consulted. These included not only the news and popular magazines but those in trade and professional fields, aimed, as but two small examples, at the entertainment world and the building groups.

The United States smothered the enemy in an avalanche of production the like of which he had never seen or dreamed of.

—WILLIAM S. KNUDSEN

Readiness for defense, like war itself, is total.

—JAMES M. LANDIS

Give them swing bands, not cold harps, to these our boys.

—ELMA DEAN

We will not only defend ourselves to the uttermost, but will make certain this form of treachery shall never endanger us again.

—FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

The Chief's got his fire out . . . !

—FIORELLO H. LA GUARDIA

Public indifference and apathy are responsible for the present low standards of physical conditioning.

—LEWIS B. HERSHEY

I am so homesick for him. It is Christmas—and the photo of his little white cross . . .

—BELLE ELLZEY

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Foreword

THE HOME FRONT has ever been a complex of comings and goings, of fevered activity, confusion, giddiness, apprehension, sorrow, and sometimes, of apathy as well. In the long history of America's many wars, it has never been as readily definable as the battlefield.

No lines have been acutely drawn. No organized and coordinated platoons stand ready to answer a sergeant's staccato command with unquestioning alacrity. While there have usually been rules or laws or assumed procedures, if only those of moral weight, their enforcement has been something else again.

The home front has been a viper's nest of limitlessly diverse and generally unanticipated problems. Nonetheless, it has inescapably remained the wellspring of our country's fighting men and, equally important, of the stuff with which they have fought. Americans in war after war, commencing with the Revolution, have rallied to the colors and in their own and often obtuse democratic fashion managed to forge the tools of victory.

Twice during the first half of this century the comfortable ruts of peacetime existence in the United States, worn deep as if forever, were erased suddenly, and in their place was substituted the home front.

The nation approached "the great adventure" of World War I in a state of exhilaration that verged on hysteria. "Preparedness Parades," held prior to the declaration of hostilities in April

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1917, paved the way for the emotion-laden Liberty Loan extravaganzas and for the incessant spy and "slacker" hunts that came after the United States entered the war.

The fighting men "over there" viewed the home front—as they always have—in far simpler and warmer terms than did their fellow citizens.

"I do not dare let myself think of you and the children too often," wrote Lieutenant Thomas Slusser from somewhere on the Alsatian front on June 15, 1918, to his wife, Martha, in Illinois. "It is too painful—I mean the contrast. But when I do I try in vain nearly always to picture what you are doing and thinking and talking about . . . we are all caught in this great, swift current of war and have been swept apart. Whether we will ever be swept together again all depends on the currents."

From the Marne, in that same spring of 1918, Martin Trepow scribbled in his diary, "America must win this war. Therefore I will work, I will save, I will sacrifice, I will endure. I will fight cheerfully and do my utmost as if the whole struggle depended on me alone."

The young Vermonter died in July at Château-Thierry. His words crackle with much the same emotion that inspired Alan Seeger to lyricize:

But I've a rendezvous with Death . . .
And I to my pledged word am true,
I shall not fail that rendezvous.

It was scant wonder that the haunting song "My Buddy" would come to be identified with the nostalgic and often maudlin mood of that wholly improbable carnage.

In more objective key, Mark Sullivan, the editor and writer, assessed the meaning of that war to America's hearth and habits. Its effect on the home front was nothing short of revolutionary, he concluded:

"The active ferment which was at all times the condition of American society was now greatly speeded up. Not only individuals but groups rose or fell . . . the type of person that had composed for a generation almost the exclusive patronage of

expensive hotels and of Pullman cars on the railroads was diluted by a class to whom these luxuries were new.

"One stratum of the rich were made relatively poorer . . . another class of the rich benefited enormously. These were the owners of factories, the participants in active business, the stock-holding class as distinguished from bond-holders, and the land and goods owning class . . . in proportion labor benefited most of all. . . ."

"Of the effects of war on America, by far the most fundamental was our submission to autocracy in government. . . ." ¹

As James Truslow Adams phrased it, "In the six months after our entry into the war the United States had been transformed from a highly individualistic system . . . into what was almost a great socialistic state in which the control of the whole industry, life and purpose of the nation was directed from Washington. It was an amazing transformation."

In the twenties, America, disillusioned by her own naïveté and misguided, starry hopes for shaping a nobler world out of the debris of yesterday, withdrew into a cocoon. "Isolation" became the nation's tag. Never again would Uncle Sam—or "Uncle Sap" as some bitterly thought of the United States' postbellum image—dispatch his young to far-off battlefields.

The home front would become, Americans earnestly believed, a term relegated to the musty shelves of history. And they devoted their efforts to making the twenties as unwarlike and utterly frivolous as possible. Then the crash came, and just like war itself, it seemed like hell—maybe even worse.

The nation, nonetheless, survived the depression. The mid-thirties proved increasingly bountiful years, with the cost of living for the most part attractive. The housewife could purchase bacon at thirteen cents a pound, grade-A beef at seventeen cents, coffee at twenty-five cents, or corn flakes at seven cents for a generous-sized box. In his medium-sized sedan, retailing at about five hundred dollars, father could—and often did—bring home a fifth of bourbon which cost him all of a dollar bill. Prohibition,

¹ Mark Sullivan, *Our Times*, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1936.

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with its bootleggers and gangsters on an organized basis, was gone forever.

A comfortable, modern three-bedroom house in the suburbs could be bought for seventy-five hundred dollars or less. Powder room on the first floor, electric washing machine, silent wall switches, and a paneled basement were apt to be among the bonus inducements, even on a speculation residence.

There was, however, the augury of worse times to come. It became increasingly apparent that the United States would indeed slog along that same dreary trail of the teens. The shadows of past times of trial and test lay dark over the nation's doorsteps by December 7, 1941.

Again the home front was roused from its fragile sanctuary and brittle hopes. It was mobilized in many, often peculiar, and not always obvious ways. America would once again wave tearful farewells to her sons, even as she had to their fathers, grandfathers, and great grandfathers. On the home front they would leave a void, a sense of waiting and of insecurity that had not changed since the time of Bunker Hill. And when it was all over, those who had lived through it would reflect with abiding disbelief, Had it really happened?

In the wake of World War II, however, the gradual changes in a nation's appearance, life currents, and habits would become manifest in unmistakable shadings. There would be little doubt that a colossal struggle for survival had seared the land, even though the battlefields themselves had been far distant, in unfamiliar and improbable lands, with names which were more often than not as incomprehensible as they were unpronounceable.

CHAPTER 1

Total War

THE DAY America went to war started as a quiet, rather ordinary winter Sunday—December 7, 1941.

The formal declaration of the war against Japan would not come for another twenty-four hours, and three days later against Germany and Italy. The nation, however, was in the spreading conflict from the moment the first bomb crashed upon the Pearl Harbor anchorage.

Not since the firing on Fort Sumter eighty years previously had the United States been hurled into war without warning. As President Franklin D. Roosevelt told Congress, it was a day that would "live in infamy!"

This war, although more than two years old in Europe, Africa, and parts of Asia, caught much of the nation psychologically unprepared, even though some of America's industry was partially tooled up through the happenstance of overseas orders. Americans reacted much in accord with their individual natures—only, as one chronicler noted, "more so."

In Lafayette Park, across from the White House, in Washington, it was Trafalgar Square, London, in September 1939 all over again. There the people congregated as though half-expecting the Chief Executive to appear, with his reassuring smile and commanding voice and tell them that they could all go home and that somehow in some wholly unimaginable way everything would be all right.

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The throngs continued to gather in numbers this unseasonably mild December evening and stare at their country's most famous mansion. No one, not even the guards, strode out to speak so much as a word to them. In fact, the presentiments of the hour became even more foreboding when the customary floodlights shining against the gleaming white facade winked out, leaving almost total darkness.

Like children in trouble and indecision, the people shuffled about. Strangers whispered nervous comments to one another as though seeking refuge in their very words. Finally the crowds with curious spontaneity broke into a ragged chorus of "The Star-Spangled Banner," then "My Country 'Tis of Thee," "God Bless America," and similar patriotic or semipatriotic songs and anthems.

The lights were not entirely going out in Washington, but they were being dimmed. The Capitol, quickly taking its cue from the Executive Mansion, was wholly darkened on the outside, as were other government buildings.

An unfamiliar clomp of heavy boots echoed over the avenues of the nation's capital as Marines and Army MP's, wearing the "tin" helmets left by their forebears of a past struggle, marched in from nearby bases to assume sentry duty around the stone and concrete mausoleums of government.

Churchgoers in the West that Sunday, where the time was two or three hours later than in Washington, were still in church or on their way there when the news flashed to a thousand Main Streets. Generally as speechless as their parishioners, many clergymen changed hymns at the last moment, telling organists to pull out the stops and let such militant tunes as "Onward Christian Soldiers," "The Church's One Foundation," and "The Son of God Goes Forth to War" ring out.

While the more reflective "Lead Kindly Light" or "Abide With Me" sounded from fewer organ lofts than usual, other Americans neither sang hymns nor went to church but prayed in the hush of their homes. Many more sought solace in the familiar panacea of alcohol, especially those in the military reserves or with a high draft eligibility.

The West Coast, like Washington and other Eastern seaboard cities, made at least desultory efforts toward a "yellow-out," although no one in authority, either military or civilian, was entirely certain against what contingency or peril. The sudden blanketing of the customary garish glare of American cities, however, at least helped drive home the new reality of wartime.

Alaska swung into a full alert. Anchorage, fearing both submarine and air attack, was almost totally blacked out.

Area military headquarters tore open long-sealed orders on enemy invasion, sabotage, and civil insurrection. Soldiers and sailors, bayonets on their rifles, augmented by city and state police and platoons of civilian guards, including pistol-carrying hordes summoned hastily from detective agencies, took up posts around airfields, shipyards, and defense factories the length and breadth of the nation. If some were left over, they were assigned to protect bridges, railways, reservoirs, and power lines.

Private aircraft were grounded. Ships navigating in and out of harbor reverted to radio silence—an expedient, however, which was to prove more hazardous than chancing interception by the enemy.

Censorship was slapped on radiograms and cables. As soon as the machinery could be set up, no one could post a letter out of the country without its contents being scrutinized.

That same Sunday night the next morning's extras appeared. Their inside pages, made up hours or even days prior to the attack, spoke of "gay supper parties" and of the customary frivolous plans for the nearing Yuletide. They suddenly read like epitaphs for an era.

At noon on Monday, President Roosevelt delivered a ringing promise before a joint session of Congress: "We will not only defend ourselves to the uttermost, but will make very certain that this form of treachery shall never endanger us again . . . there is no blinking at the fact that our people, our territory and our interests are in grave danger . . . the American people in their righteous might will win through to absolute victory!"

The response was as spontaneous as when grandfather answered another national alarm with a resounding, "We are com-

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ing, Father Abraham!" Recruiting stations threw open their doors to a horde. It included—along with the young and the fit—the lame, the halt, the squinting, and the overage doughboys of 1917.

An old soldier, General of the Armies John J. Pershing, stalked with cane to the White House from his suite at Walter Reed Medical Center. While his highest rank presupposed continual active duty, at the age of eighty-one the leader of the AEF was seeking an actual role in the war.

"General," beamed Roosevelt, "you are magnificent!"

World War I was by no means the last conflict to be militantly represented by veterans of "righteous might." The commander of the Georgia Division of the United Confederate Veterans, Major General H. T. Dowling, aged ninety-two, announced in Atlanta that his fifty surviving members "are at war with Japan!" He confessed, "If I was able I don't know of anything that would afford me more pleasure than to get on to those Japs!"

In Athol, Massachusetts, across the fields from historic Concord, an aggressive group from seventeen to seventy years of age oiled up shotguns and squirrel rifles to drill as minutemen. Across the nation in Tillamook, Oregon, a thousand males, as mixed and motley as those in Athol, took a "guerrilla oath." Led by a blind World War I veteran, Stewart P. Arnold, the group was not sanctioned by the Army: Farmers from Whidby Island, Puget Sound, Washington, patrolled the beaches nightly, armed with pitchforks, clubs, and shotguns, awaiting the invasion.

On a more elevated level, Wendell Willkie, who had unsuccessfully challenged Roosevelt's bid for reelection in 1940, asked for "tanks, not talks!" Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson, more reflective, smoothed his thinning, gray locks and observed, "My first feeling was of relief that the indecision was over and that a crisis had come in a way which would unite all our people." The aging, sick Secretary of State, Cordell Hull, added that the Japanese had been "exceedingly unwise."

Isolationists and foes of the Administration, almost without exception, rallied to the colors. Their fiery spokesman, Senator

Burton K. Wheeler of Montana, asserted, "The only thing now is to do our best to lick hell out of them!"

Lots of people were expressing themselves publicly and privately.

"Golly," sixteen-year-old Mary Critchlon confided to a reporter from the *Seattle* (Washington) *Post*, "when I heard the news I cried all morning!" Like thousands of other young girls, Mary was "going steady" with a serviceman.

Others, who were older, however, had no time for tears. Mrs. Lillie Martin, for example, the twenty-five-year-old wife of a disabled World War I veteran, announced she had enlisted in the American Women's Volunteer Services to drive ambulances. Her husband, Forrest Martin, planned to play "mother" to four little children in their Denver home.

The West Coast experienced its initial alert the second night, December eighth. Police sirens wailed through Market Street and other thoroughfares of hilly San Francisco. Lights in homes, stores, and larger buildings winked out. Searchlights from the Presidio fingered skyward. The Golden Gate city on the Pacific coast became abruptly reminiscent of London, Liverpool, Rotterdam, or Berlin.

"Army information sources confirmed today," reported the Associated Press, "that two squadrons of enemy planes—numbering about 15 planes to a squadron—crossed the coastline west of San Jose Monday night and reconnoitred the San Francisco Bay area and other sections of California.

"The Army said the presence of these squadrons of planes indicated in all probability that an enemy aircraft carrier was lurking off the coast, possibly as far out as 500 or 600 miles."

Brigadier General William Ord Ryan, commanding the Fourth Interceptor Command, told reporters that his planes had turned back the enemy at the Golden Gate. He did not qualify his assertion.

Although there was no real foe to repulse, the West Coast from San Diego to Vancouver was gripped by fear. More than a thousand persons in Seattle roamed the streets in wild panic until

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long after midnight. They smashed windows of stores burning customary burglar lights. Displays were looted; furniture and show cases were wrecked. Among the carnage revealed in the wan light of daybreak was a gruesome reminder of the night's madness: a beheaded Chinaman, obviously mistaken for a Japanese. His executioners were not found.

In San Francisco, a murderously overzealous home-defense guard on the Bay Bridge to Oakland shot and seriously wounded a motorist, Mrs. Marie Sayre, who was tardy in halting when he waved her down. Unlike the victim in Seattle, she did not remotely resemble any Asian.

Tragically reminiscent of World War I days, this spurt of insanity caused one minister to recall the Scottish prayer:

From ghoulies and ghosties and long-leggety beasties,
And things that go bump in the night, good Lord deliver us.

The eerie warbling of the air-raid sirens also was heard throughout greater Manhattan. More than a million school children, pedestrians, and office workers hurried to basements until the all clear sounded. While the Army admitted the alert was false, the experience pointed up a disquieting truth: this city of seven million souls did not have one shelter adequate by London standards.

America's reflexes seemed groggy as she answered the bell for another war. Surprised and unprepared, the nation exhibited little of the brisk assurance of 1917. Flamboyance was lacking.

There was no cheering or much enthusiasm anywhere for this conflict that had been willed so suddenly. Deep in her preparations to fight a war in which she was already embroiled and beset with doubts as to the future, America faced a Christmas season as ominous as any since the Civil War. Telegrams accumulated, such as one which arrived at the home of a widower, John F. Fitzsimmons, in Waterloo, Iowa:

YOUR NEPHEW, CORP. MICHAEL J. CASHEN, DIED AT APPROXIMATELY 10 A.M. DECEMBER 7. CASUALTY, GUNSHOT WOUNDS. FURTHER INFORMATION WILL BE SENT LATER.

Aged thirty-four, Cashen, a graduate of St. Mary's parochial school, had left his job as a shoe clerk to enlist in the Army Air Force only the past year. The last the elderly Fitzsimmons had heard from Mike, he was stationed at Wheeler Field, Hawaii.

Older residents recalled that another Iowan, Merle Hay, from the town of Glidden, had been among the first three AEF casualties of World War I. Merle was killed in a trench raid in eastern France, November 1917.

Cashen's death was one of the more than six thousand this December that projected American homes into sudden mourning. Added to the casualties from Pearl Harbor were those from other American outposts in the Pacific. Guam was lost on December tenth; Wake Island on December twenty-second—Wake would become a new synonym for American heroism.

The Japanese invaders, a tidal wave of sea power, supported by thunderous aerial squadrons, swarmed ashore on northern Luzon and pounded toward Manila. The defenders, gaunt-eyed, starving, almost depleted of ammunition, fought back stubbornly as they retreated south towards the Bataan Peninsula. Other American and Philippine forces dug into the natural rock fortifications of Corregidor Island, originally used by the Spanish as a strongpoint in the Manila Bay defenses.

Somehow, in the midst of grief and apprehension, the people of the United States found a certain heart to prepare for Christmas. There was the sound of carols and the jangle of Salvation Army bells on frosty sidewalks. Shopping continued if at a slower pace. Christmas trees, with limited lighting "to conserve electricity," sparkled from homes, offices, stores, and city parks.

Little girls, such as Arville Dunkard of Kansas City, joined legions of others who repaired and wrapped dolls and other toys for the world's homeless or orphaned children. The Red Cross would endeavor to transport the presents across war-roiled seas to play proxy Santa Claus.

The nation hardly had time to concede that it was irrevocably at war when a distinguished guest, who was the symbol of allied resistance, arrived at the White House. On December twenty-

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sixth, Winston Churchill addressed Congress with words of encouragement and humor.

"What kind of people," asked the Prime Minister of Great Britain, "do they [our enemies] think we are? Do they not realize we shall never cease to persevere against them until we have taught them a lesson which they and the world will never forget?"

Then, with a smile, he told the congressmen, "I cannot help but reflecting that if my father had been American and my mother British, instead of the other way around, I might have got here on my own."

British armor had pushed Marshal Graziani back in North Africa to pound once more into Benghazi. Otherwise, there was little enough from which "Winnie" or his friend F.D.R. could take heart. The British crown colony of Hong Kong had fallen on Christmas Day. Singapore was tottering, invaded not by sea, for which defense had long been prepared, but through the jungles of the Malay Peninsula. The new battleship *HMS Prince of Wales*, on which the Atlantic Charter had been signed, and the battle cruiser *Repulse* were sunk with appalling speed by Japanese dive bombers. The era of the cumbersome dreadnought all but banged shut then and there. The combined British, Australian, Dutch, and United States fleets in the Pacific appeared hardly a match for the armadas from Nippon.

New Year's Eve arrived and passed with quiet and sobriety. The lights in Times Square were too dim to permit the usual display, featuring a ball of light plummeting down the Times Tower. Crowds, with military uniforms predominating, nonetheless milled on Broadway and Forty-second Street.

Much of industry already had swung over to a round-the-clock schedule. The example of the Northern Pump Company of Minneapolis was typical. Employees took half an hour off at midnight to blow horns and drink—at least for the photographer—coffee and cider, then returned to their lathes and benches.

There was not much in the news to trigger celebration. Two days later on January second, Manila fell to the Japanese. The naval base at Cavite had already been evacuated, petroleum

tanks put to the torch, and demolition charges set and detonated under docks, piers, and other installations. The invader had overrun all of Luzon in just twenty-seven days.

Ships were being torpedoed off both coasts, sometimes in sight of residents. The stark spectacle of oil-begrimed survivors struggling onto Florida beaches was becoming all too familiar, as well as incongruous, with cabanas and millionaires' stucco villas often providing the background. At night, there was the added accompaniment of soft music from bordering patios.

When the American freighter *Absaroka* "swallowed" a torpedo off California but limped awash to port, the Navy decided it was time for publicity of a familiar weave. Jane Russell, the long-legged actress, posed inside the gaping, jagged torpedo hole in the vessel. Close to her ample bosom, she held a sign, with an already familiar slogan:

A SLIP OF THE LIP
MAY SINK A SHIP

For obvious effect, SINK was crossed out; HAVE SUNK was substituted.

The loss of a ship or even of many ships was, however, too vast a canvas, too monstrous for the individual mind to appreciate. It took the lesser happenings to thrust home the meaning of war.

Such a shock was felt after America had been a fighting participant for barely a month. On January fifteenth, Carole Lombard, the thirty-two-year-old beauty queen and wife of Clark Gable, starred at the Treasury Department's first major war bond rally in Indianapolis. Herself a Hoosier, from Fort Wayne, and a former Mack Sennett girl, the blonde, sometimes plain-spoken actress helped sell a record \$2,500,000 worth of bonds. She was traveling with her mother, Mrs. Elizabeth Peters, and an MGM publicity agent, Otto Winkler.

At 4:23 A.M. on Friday, January 17, Miss Lombard boarded TWA Flight Three for Hollywood, via Albuquerque. It was winter. Dark, foreboding clouds hovered over the flat farmlands of Indiana. Both Mrs. Peters and Winkler, uneasy, attempted to

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talk their famous traveling companion into transferring accommodations to a train. Winkler flipped a coin, and lost.

He would fly in spite of his profound misgivings.

Accustomed to air travel, in the way that most people then were to train or automobile, the pretty actress was entirely content.

"I'll curl up and take a pill and pff! I'll be asleep," she told photographers and reporters at the Indianapolis airport.

That afternoon, fifteen Army ferry-command pilots boarded the twin-engined Douglas "Sky Club" DC-3 at Albuquerque. To make room for them, several low-priority passengers were "bumped."

Among them was Joseph Szigeti, the talented concert violinist. During the slow, boring flight from Indianapolis he had "pondered the identity of this strikingly handsome woman."

The artist added (in a letter to the author), "She intrigued me and I was inwardly scolding myself for not being forward enough to try and make her acquaintance . . . for I kept thinking: how I would like to know which couturier made that superbly cut suit . . . so I could pass the address to my wife. She seemed tired, preoccupied, overworked."

Szigeti and the others removed from the plane settled down in the airport's drafty waiting room. They were among the first in these early weeks of hostilities to taste the tedium and inconvenience which would become entirely symptomatic of wartime travel, on or above the ground.

The plane taxied away. Its propellers smacked a frosty shower of light snow into the faces of ramp attendants. They turned their backs, tightening their parkas.

The airliner made an unscheduled stop at Las Vegas; then took off at seven o'clock for Los Angeles. Thirty minutes later, ranchers and forest wardens saw a flaring of light in the direction of Table Rock Mountain.

Journey's end had come for all twenty-two souls aboard TWA Flight 3. A familiar, lovely face which could evoke unusual pleasure and, in millions of men, desire, had been snatched

away. This was a battle death in the commonplace immediacy of Main Street, the very sort of human tragedy on the home front that has hammered out again and again for generations of Americans the heartlessness and horror of war.

CHAPTER 2

Disaster in Manhattan

WAR IS WASTE. But its natural destruction is often compounded by carelessness, ineptitude, and crass human stupidity exaggerated in tempo with the times.

A deplorable example occurred on a raw February afternoon in 1942. It was, as a matter of fact, the day on which "war time"—an hour ahead of normal—was commenced as a conservation measure for electricity.

About 2:30 P.M. that Monday, February ninth, the prospective commander of one of the world's largest and gaudiest ships decided to take matters in his own hands. Captain Robert C. Coman said, in effect, to hell with the chain of command.

This veteran of thirty-three years of commissioned service had never served on a vessel so unready for sea. The name *Normandie* was not sufficient in itself to impress him, any more than the sum lavished on construction of this pride of the French Line—more than \$59,000,000.

On the following Saturday, the liner-transport was scheduled to sail from New York for Boston, loaded with upwards of ten thousand troops—an entire division or its equivalent—plus cargo, before proceeding into the Atlantic under sealed orders.

"Plug" Coman's long, rather melancholy face grew even more somber and seemingly increased in length as he picked up the telephone from the ornate desk of the captain's cabin and asked the operator to put him through to the White House. His only

hope, Coman reasoned in his fever of worry, was to ask the President himself to cancel the sailing orders. Connections to Washington, as usual since December seventh, were jammed. The captain waited.

The 1,029-foot *Normandie* (exceeded in length only by the *Queen Elizabeth*) had dashed safely into New York Harbor at the time of the invasion of Poland. For the next twenty-one months she languished at her Hudson River dock, a few blocks north of Forty-second Street.

Only a skeleton crew was on board to keep her engines from deteriorating and her superstructure from rusting. Left to the few sailors were the ship's glories—the heavy Aubusson carpet in the hundred-foot-long grand saloon, the Algerian onyx paneling, and the great series of glass panels depicting the mythology of the sea. The gamblers, the hard drinkers, and the perennial ship-board swains were gone. The bronze doors of the smoking lounge were closed, apparently for the duration of the war. There were no audiences to applaud in the *Normandie's* theater, no worshipers to kneel in her chapel. Her modern hospital, complete to X-ray machines and operating table, empty of patients, had lost even its telltale reek of carbolic.

The *Normandie* consumed a thousand dollars a day in berthing charges, while she rested at the north side of Pier 88. With no concern over theft and, apparently, little more against the possibility of sabotage, there seemed but one remaining contingency to guard against: fire. And yet, her designer, Vladimir Yourkevitch, had reason to suggest that the *Normandie* was as nearly fireproof as any vessel of her time. The United States Coast Guard reported: "She had every known device to guard against fire. Cabin partitions were of asbestos laid on duralumin and painted with fireproof paint. Drapes and hangings were fireproofed and thermostatic controls were installed to record inordinate increase of temperature in any part of the ship. There was a central fire station equipped with indicators for detecting smoke, and an alarm system."

As an extra precaution, the French Line paid for a direct telegraph line to the central control desk at the New York City Fire

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Department. The city's apparatus could be summoned by the tap of a key.

On May 15, 1941, almost a year after the fall of France, the *Normandie* was taken under the protective custody of the Coast Guard to "insure her security." On December 12, following the Pearl Harbor attack, Admiral Harold R. Stark, Chief of Naval Operations, ordered the removal of the remaining French crew.

The less than two hundred coastguardsmen who replaced the French were supposed to maintain steam in the engine room, continue the fire watch already set, and—if possible—hold the liner in readiness for the sea. The latter responsibility, however, could scarcely have been met even by the remnants of the original crew, no longer easy with the intricacies of the ship's operation.

Custody of the *Normandie* soon became a week-to-week matter. On December sixteenth, the United States Maritime Commission took over legal title and possession of the ship. The Coast Guard remained aboard as a police force.

A week later, on Christmas Eve, the Navy took over from the Maritime Commission. It did so with some qualms. The department's Bureau of Ships had ascertained through inspection and checking of the French Line's records that "the stability of the ship under certain conditions was questionable and that the number of troops to be carried, the armament and other features of the conversion would have to be limited." She suffered from "a low metacentric height, whereby the shift of small weight could cause dangerous listing . . . a very tender ship." In other words, the *Normandie* was top-heavy.

The Army Transportation Service sent its own experts aboard and found that the cavernous vessel was about as suited to troop-carrying as a Staten Island ferry—maybe less so. Drastic changes would have to be made in the "berthing and mess" halls and even in "sanitary facilities," where gleaming porcelain and brass were no longer as important as sheer quantity.

The Robins Dry Dock and Repair Company, a subsidiary of Todd Shipyards, was awarded a contract to have its engineers do what they could to make this garish ark of military use to the Allies.

Early in January, title to the *Normandie* reverted to the Army. Then, on January twenty-seventh, she was back in Navy hands, an aquatic white elephant—or whale—that no one wanted. Four days later, Captain Coman reported aboard. She was to be commissioned as the *Lafayette* on February eleventh. Irrespective of his wishes, from that date on, Coman would be fully responsible for her.

The crew allotted him numbered five hundred, one third that normally on the *Normandie*, or about half of a cruiser's complement. Even a heavy cruiser was less than one eighth the size of the French ship.

It was apparent to Plug Coman's seasoned eye that months would be required to make his vessel a proper and "taut" transport. When he received orders to sail on February fourteenth, he was dumbstruck. But his mounting protestations always arrived at the same dead end, causing him to conclude that the orders must have stemmed directly from the White House.

An especial nightmare was the fire-fighting equipment. Out of 666 extinguishers, only 10 met American specifications, and less than 50 per cent were in good condition or even partly filled. The fittings for the hose lines were of a French gauge and design. They could not, by any manner of coaxing, couple with Navy, Army, Coast Guard, or other American hoses. The hydrants, as well, were misfits.

To compound a volatile situation, the remaining coastguardsmen, recently arrived Navy crew, and the dry dock company's workers had each the hazy impression that one of the other groups was responsible for fire prevention. A reporter from Marshall Field's newspaper *PM*, posing as a workman, wandered about on board for hours and came to the conclusion that outrageous laxity had made the ship a pyromaniac's dream. He also observed that the screening of enemy aliens had gotten out of hand. But Ralph Ingersoll, the tabloid's editor, decided the shocked reporter's article would be so damaging to national morale that he suppressed it.

Not only was there basis for assuming that the dry dock company or the Coast Guard was responsible for the ship, but a plausible case could be built for the Bureau of Ships, the District

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Materiel Office of the Naval District, the Naval District itself, and the Navy Department as well. The naval crew had no doubt that Captain Coman was in full authority, but Coman was delegated "no affirmative duties" other than to "familiarize" himself with the floating palace.

His general guidelines were contained in a paper entitled, "General Outline of Duties of a Prospective Commanding Officer of an Auxiliary Type Vessel." This document covered in a laconic manner the daily routine and situations that might occur on ships not of "the line," from Yangtze River gunboats to store and hospital ships (how to stow biscuit tins, dispose of garbage on inland waterways, bring litter cases aboard, hold deck courts, and the like). The author, however, had never conceived of the possibility of a member of the United States Navy being given command of the *Normandie*.

The distressed captain wandered, like any passenger, through the Louis XIV corridors of the *Normandie*. "From time to time he consulted with the naval inspector and made suggestions with reference to the conversion work," according to the Coast Guard. But *no one* was obliged to pay any attention to what he said—not until February eleventh.

On February fourth, Coman watched a bulky cargo being trundled aboard: 1,140 bales of canvas life jackets. They were filled with kapok, an oily Javanese cottonlike material, and packed in bales weighing about thirty-five pounds each. The highly combustible jackets were wrapped first in tar paper, then in a cheap, fuzzy grade of burlap.

Someone suggested that the life preservers be temporarily heaped in the grand saloon. There the panelled figures in the mythology of the sea could gaze impassively down upon the bales from the ceiling thirty-five feet in height while the life jackets awaited stenciling and distribution to lockers about the ship. Their inflammable nature was recognized since a "No Smoking" sign was now hung in the saloon. It was generally understood, as well, that no welding or burning should be done in the great hall.

On February seventh, Captain Coman, strolling through the

saloon, decided it should serve much the same purpose for troops as for first-class ocean voyagers—a “recreation area.” He asked that the magnificent Aubusson carpet, weighing upwards of a ton, be ripped out and replaced by more utilitarian linoleum.

It was also decided to remove four “stanchions,” or columns—each measuring fifteen inches in diameter and weighing about five hundred pounds—from the saloon “as a safety measure to prevent injury to the troops.” No one, apparently, suggested that tens of thousands of trans-Atlantic passengers had used this same hall without incurring “injury” from the columns.

The bales of life preservers were now pushed slightly aside, thus clearing a space around the stanchions of no more than three feet. “Burning,” with an acetylene torch, a process which was not supposed to have occurred in any part of this area, was ordered for the ninth.

Meanwhile, also on Saturday, February seventh, the Chief of Naval Operations, prodded by the White House, requested information on the “possibility” of the ship being made ready to sail the following Saturday. The District Materiel Officer answered that it “seemed probable” that “essential items” of the conversion would be completed by February fourteenth, but it would entail a “tremendous rushing.”

Monday, February ninth, dawned gray, with a hint of snow in the northwest wind. The thermometer stood at twenty-eight degrees. The Bureau of Ships telephoned the Third Naval District to “proceed on the basis of the ship leaving New York Saturday.”

The *Normandie*, with thirty-five hundred servicemen and civilians aboard, became a chaos of noise. In the grand saloon, workmen were cutting through the stanchions with acetylene torches. Asbestos shields had been placed behind the columns, and a few water buckets set beside the welders. There seemingly was no fear of setting fire to the bales of life jackets, in spite of their proximity to the incandescent spit of flame.

By noon two of the stanchions were down, and the crew knocked off for lunch. At two o'clock the welders were back. The third stanchion went the way of the first two, and a work-

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man, Clement Derrick of Brooklyn, now placed his torch at the base of the fourth. He watched the blinding white flame eat through the steel.

A few minutes after half past two, a shower of sparks far heavier, hotter, and of much more velocity than normal cascaded like fireworks off the shield and bounced into the nearest bales. The unusual intensity of the torrent was caused possibly by some fluctuation in the oxygen-acetylene mixture or through a chance impurity in the metal. The burlap's fuzz flared up instantly.

An eighteen-year-old ironworker, Charles Collins also of Brooklyn, immediately tried to beat out the fire, but "the smoke and heat were terrific." His hands blistered, Derrick picked up one of the two available water buckets and splashed its contents on the blaze. It did no good whatsoever.

Someone yelled, "Fire!"

The call was relayed from man to man through the passageways, saloons, and cabins of the ship, stem to stern, from her lowest vitals to the bridge where Captain Coman banged down the telephone without ever getting through to his Commander in Chief.

Over the loudspeaker system came the order, "Get off the ship!"

It was repeated in a hoarse monotone. However, the workmen in the grand saloon were bravely tossing bales about, trying to stamp out the conflagration. Moving the strapped cotton served only to fan the flames more brightly.

Within a minute the blaze had enveloped the entire pile of life preservers and spread to the ceiling, walls and the floor which was still carpeted. The linoleum, if indeed it had been requisitioned in accordance with Coman's wishes, had not yet arrived. The ceiling panels disappeared one by one in yellow smoke and flame. At the aft entrance, the "fire" door was burning like so much tinder.

Those inside nonetheless continued their efforts to halt the fire's spread. Two men connected a ship's hose which had been run into the saloon from the promenade deck and played it on the flames. Others dragged a second hose over hot cinders and

the spurts of flame from the seams in the Aubusson carpet only to obtain at first a dribble of water, then nothing. A third hose would not produce even that much liquid. There was no pressure.

Still another man aimed a fire extinguisher at the mounting inferno. When nothing happened, he flung the useless container with an oath at the flames.

The fire spread from the grand saloon to the adjoining main smoking room and up the grand staircase to the wardroom. At the same time, the flames, gathering momentum with catastrophic speed, raced out onto the promenade deck where they ignited the canvas bunk bottoms stored there. Leapfrogging all nonflammable objects in its path, searing and cracking windows, the fire progressed into more and more cabins and saloons on this long, broad deck, which had once been a seaborne equivalent of the Champs Elysées.

In about five minutes, the entire midsection of the *Normandie* was glowing. No one had yet turned in a city alarm.

One of the contributing factors to this disastrous delay was the difficulty in locating the Coast Guard fire brigade. Its headquarters had been moved from its former location on the main deck down to "A" deck, two decks below the promenade, and was at the moment inaccessible even by telephone. Few on board, other than brigade members, knew of the move.

Not until 2:49 P.M., or at least fifteen minutes after the outbreak of the fire did the New York City Fire Department receive a "special building call"—an alarm telephoned in by someone on Pier 88, possibly even a passerby. Three engine companies quickly trailed by two hook-and-ladder companies and a battalion chief arrived within minutes at the North River slip.

Their trucks had barely stopped crunching over the frozen slush and cobblestones of West Street when the battalion chief, gauging the smoke billowing out of almost every aperture of the liner, called for additional equipment and a second chief.

The firemen moved into a holocaust. The pressure on the ship's water mains had gone off; the electric system also had sputtered out into dead cables. Half-blinded, stumbling toward them

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from every deck were workmen struggling to safety through the unfamiliar maze of the ship. Many had formed themselves into human chains, snaking along, each man clutching whoever was in front of him.

Curiously, it was the very clutter within the caverns of the ship that enabled the workmen to reach safety. Automatic fire doors or antiflooding bulkheads and hatches had started to grind shut only to be kept ajar by scaffolding and other temporary obstructions. Otherwise, with the electricity failing, scores might have been trapped and suffocated.

When the second battalion chief reached the pier, he sounded a third, then a fourth alarm. Soon a fifth, or general, alarm brought approximately fifty pieces of fire-fighting apparatus to the North River, together with all available fireboats and private tugs capable of pumping water under high pressure. Shipping along the river was brought to a halt.

Admiral Andrews, Mayor Fiorello La Guardia, wearing his familiar corduroy-collared raincoat, and Fire Commissioner Patrick J. Walsh established a temporary headquarters in the pier shed.

Others swarmed into the tarry interior of the French Line pier: off-duty policemen, precinct detectives, FBI agents, and the vanguard of helmeted, rifle-carrying soldiers. Interspersed among this milling multitude were squads of roving reporters and cameramen plus a dozen or more special groups of civilians, including the Red Cross and American Women's Voluntary Services.

In freshly starched uniforms, the women set up coffee and doughnut carts just as the disaster manual prescribed. As though in competition, hot-dog and ice-cream vendors pushed their carts to the perimeters of the fire lines along West Street.

Cordons of police could barely keep the onlookers out of the way of firemen whose hoses ran to hydrants many blocks distant. The smoke, which cast a weird haze over midtown Manhattan, attracted the curious by the thousands.

Radio stations from coast to coast interrupted afternoon soap

operas, cooking hints, and children's stories with bulletins on the progress of this spectacular blaze. In drama and shock value, the *Normandie* burning was radio fare eclipsed only by the Pearl Harbor coverage, and certainly on a par with the explosion of the *Hindenburg* dirigible at Lakehurst in May 1937. The morbid carnival aspect of the tragic drama was itself reminiscent of that attending the entrapment of Floyd Collins in a Kentucky cave in 1925.

A ghoulish, muted chorus of "oh's" and "ah's" occasionally acknowledged, as if in macabre applause, a particularly brilliant sheet of flame or thick accumulation of smoke billowing from a porthole. As the gray paint cracked from one of the funnels, the black and red French Line colors were nostalgically revealed.

Then gradually, as ton upon ton of water poured onto the muck and cinders of her once resplendent, holystoned decks, the great liner began to list away from the pier onto her port side. Some of the water cascaded again into the flotsam of the icy river. Enough remained, however, to turn the hundreds of cabins and saloons of the superstructure into so many reservoirs.

Her tilt increased, degree by degree, and the danger mounted that the "very tender ship" with the "low metacentric height" might capsize. Floodlights, piercing the smoky evening, shone off the gray plates of the leaning vessel. She was like some slowly dying prehistoric monster, no longer able to support her own preposterous weight.

Vladimir Yourkevitch, designer of the vessel, had been denied admission to the pier. He was powerless to convince the soldiers who he was. But even he would have been unable to save his creation. Scuttling was suggested by others, then overruled in the belief that flooding would only hasten her capsizing, rather than ease her great mass onto the soft mud of the river bottom.

A salvage company official's suggestion that the fire be allowed to burn itself out was also difficult to accept. Besides, the New York Fire Department had won the battle. By six o'clock that evening the fire was under control, although the *Normandie* was listing at an angle of twenty degrees. At twenty past eight

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Mayor LaGuardia, clutching his corduroy collar, announced hoarsely, but triumphantly to the platoons of newsmen, "The Chief's got his fire out!"

Radio programs from Long Island to Los Angeles were interrupted as announcers excitedly relayed "the Little Flower's" pronouncement on this fantastically costly marine disaster.

Firemen commenced the tedious, cold job of coiling up miles of grimy hose and reloading their trucks. Weary Red Cross workers and other volunteers, their uniforms no longer pressed and sometimes streaked with dirt and soot, started to close up doughnut and coffee carts. It was time to go home.

By eleven o'clock the ship was tilting at a bizarre forty degree angle, seemingly defying gravity. No one understood what kept her up at all. Almost credible was the somewhat flamboyant explanation of a radio reporter, "Queen that she was, hurt and tottering, the *Normandie* was proud to the end!"

At midnight, those still remaining aboard were ordered off—quickly.

About half past two on the morning of Tuesday, February tenth, there came a straining and creaking of massive hawsers, thick as a wrestler's biceps. Then one after another the lines parted with the report of gunfire. From inside the doomed liner there reverberated a clattering and banging as anything not fastened—from grand pianos and stepladders to cases of beans and as yet unmounted three-inch guns—slid sideways.

With immense weariness, the fire-scourged *Normandie* completed her roll until she lay on her port side. Her three funnels paralleled the ice-clogged water of the slip.

Everything had been pitted against the vessel. Recent dredging operations beside Pier 88 had left the river bottom, forty-five feet down, sloping at a steep angle which assisted the *Normandie's* capsizing.

Unreasonable haste to put her to sea combined with gross carelessness, confusion, and the further ingredient of cruel coincidence to knock the liner out of service as effectively as though she had been torpedoed. Opportunities for sabotage, a Congress-

sional Naval Affairs Committee observed, were "abundant." But sabotage had not been necessary.

Only one person, a ship worker, lost his life. The fatality, Frank Trentacosta, thirty-six, fractured his skull when he fell down a ladder. Nearly two hundred others carried cuts, bruises, and burns or temporary eye and lung irritation as testament to a wartime loss that should never have occurred, to a dramatic costly casualty on the home front.

At enormous expense and superhuman effort, the liner was refloated. Even this was in vain, a harvest of yet more waste in a continuing tragedy of errors.

The *Normandie* had to be scrapped anyhow. Ultimately the French Line was reimbursed for the colossal blunderings of the Americans.

CHAPTER 3

The Uncivil Defense

THE ENDING of automobile production sounded as final and as warlike to most Americans as a bomb. The last car consigned to the civilian market was trundled off the assembly line in Pontiac, Michigan, in early February. It was a gray sedan with black "victory trim," meaning no chrome.

Ford, Chrysler, Studebaker, Packard, and Nash had already shut down. Now, with General Motors joining them, more than half a million auto workers were left unemployed while the factories retooled to fabricate tanks, planes, command cars, small boats, a long list of items in transport, and a few, such as gun mounts, outside this specialized realm.

As the nation's civilians began to think of civilian problems in wartime, they wondered how they would be able to buy gas to run the cars they had, old or new, or keep them in tires or spare parts. It was already obvious that this taken-for-granted piece of personal property had overnight assumed luxury status. For example, a five-dollar federal tax, demanding a small windshield sticker, pyramided atop existing state and local motor vehicle taxes, had already come into being.

However, these stickers and the abrupt halt of automobile assembly lines were but some of the meaningful straws in the wind in America's newest and largest-scale war. There were the headlines like these:

3 VESSELS SUNK IN NORTH ATLANTIC
 RESCUE 71 ADRIFT 5 DAYS
 U.S. SHIPPING ON EAST COAST AGAIN STRUCK

Not even the famous radio message, "Sighted Sub, Sank Same," flashed in from a naval patrol plane, quite made up for the carnage which often occurred within sight and hearing of the home front. The four-stack destroyer *Jacob Jones* of World War I vintage was patrolling off the entrance to Delaware Bay on a dark, choppy February night when hit by two torpedoes.

All but 11 of her crew of 150 officers and men perished in her rapid foundering within sight of the channel buoys. The destroyer's very name, as a matter of fact, seems to have been jinxed. A preceding *Jacob Jones* was sunk four hundred miles off the French coast in 1917 with comparably heavy loss of life.

A Navy transport and destroyer were swept ashore in a Newfoundland gale with appalling losses. The 2,216-ton Coast Guard cutter *Alexander Hamilton*, one of the largest of this type of vessel, was torpedoed off Iceland. She sank with almost all on board.

The war at sea was felt even closer to the home front. On the late evening of February twenty-third, President Roosevelt delivered a "report to the nation," in which he expressed the opinion that "this war is a new kind of war."

His remarks were imbued with especial dimension since the press, at the suggestion of the White House, had reproduced global maps in that day's editions. Thus the Chief Executive was able to refer repeatedly to disputed parcels of the earth's surface with implications wholly intelligible to even the poorest geography student.

Among the millions of Americans listening was Lawrence ("Larry") Wheeler, proprietor of an inn on Highway 101, in Elwood, California, west of Santa Barbara and ninety-eight miles up the coast from Los Angeles. Twilight shaded the calm evening waters off the oil-field town. The weather was mild and altogether pleasant.

". . . we have," noted the President, "most certainly suffered

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losses and we shall suffer more we Americans have been compelled to yield ground but we will regain it. . . .”

Then, Larry Wheeler paused abruptly in his serving of dinner. “Suddenly,” he was to recall, “we heard a loud report followed in a few seconds by another, another. Some soldiers who were in my place said it probably was just target practice. . . .

“I went outside and walked over to a point from whence I could see the ocean. It looked like a submarine, about a mile offshore, cruising slowly down the coast and firing at regular intervals. I could see the flashes as the gun went off.

“The sub or whatever it was seemed to be aiming at the Barnsdall Oil Company main absorption plant, located almost on the beach. They missed with all their shots at this plant, though some of the shells landed awfully close, throwing up geysers of dirt and sand near the building.

“One shell hit a well and blew the pumping plant and derrick to bits there must have been 20 or 25 men working in the field at the time and nobody was injured. One of their shots whistled over my inn, which is a good mile from the shore line and burst up the canyon on the Hollister estate across the highway their shooting wasn’t very good.”

Radio stations on the Pacific Coast from Los Angeles through Santa Barbara and along the Santa Barbara Channel in the Elwood-Goleta area went off the air before the listeners could hear the President’s quoting of Tom Paine, “These are the times that try men’s souls,” or Roosevelt own aside, “Tyranny like hell is not easily conquered.”

Lights were blacked out. Coastal aircraft, including little “one-lungers” of the Civil Air Patrol, swept out low over the darkening surf. But the enemy had gone.

After twenty-five shells lobbed in nearly twenty minutes, the Japanese commander still had started no fires, caused no casualties nor significant damage. Half a dozen horses had stampeded in their pastures and jumped the fence rails to higher, safer ground. The bombardment had demonstrated, however, the wide-open vulnerability of the Pacific coast.

Further havoc was to come two nights later when, commenc-

ing at 2:25 A.M., Los Angeles was blacked out, sirens wailed their tocsin to seek shelter. Antiaircraft guns barked a raucous bedlam as searchlights crisscrossed the skies.

"It's a whole squadron!" cried one of many excited residents of the sprawling city, who adamantly would not remain under cover.

"No," shouted another, "it's a blimp!"

"Is it thunder?" queried a third, while many exclaimed at the oddity of aircraft daring to attack on so clear a night. Laughter and the shrill of children in a holiday mood punctuated the soberer obligatos.

Air-raid wardens, newly appointed and wholly untrained, yelled at the curious to get off the streets. They banged on the doors of homes, stores, or offices where any offending light peeped through. Police cars, in rougher tempo, augmented the wardens' work. One woman, slow in extinguishing a lower-floor lamp, was hit over the head by a patrolman trigger-happy with his nightstick. He whisked her off to jail with the same furious sense of public service that might have attended the smashing of the Dalton gang or the cutting down of Dillinger.

Bistros, restaurants, and other nocturnal attractions were padlocked until 7:21 A.M. when the all clear finally sounded. However, the casualties to Angelinos and their property had a bizarre ring, considering the hurt was self-inflicted. Five persons, including an air-raid warden, were dead from heart attacks and traffic accidents in the wake of the civic turmoil caused by the blackout.

Windows were broken and roofs dented by the shrapnel sizzling skyward from upwards of two thousand rounds of AA ammunition; greenhouses and convertible automobiles particularly suffered.

The Western Defense Command maintained that unfriendly planes had actually droned overhead. Secretary Stimson supported his local officers, although Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox scoffed, "Hysteria!" The *Los Angeles Times* speculated that a giant plane-carrying Japanese submarine might have launched the raiders.

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While no proof of a threatened attack by enemy bombers or from any reasonable source could ever be found, West Coasters vented their fury and frustration in general upon aliens. The 125,000 nisei in the area—American-born Japanese—became a prime target.

"Each new hour," commenced a typical telegram to the Western Defense Command, "that a single Jap is at liberty in this state is an hour we might tragically regret!"

United States Attorney General Francis Biddle pleaded in vain that the drastic actions engendered by this attitude were neither legal nor necessary. But hatred and a blind lashing out for revenge took sway over human reason. The venom directed towards the nisei was the same as that which had already made the Pearl Harbor commanders, General Walter Short and Admiral Husband Kimmel, targets.

Fangs were bared. Scapegoats were sought with deadly passion. It had happened before, most tragically during the Civil War draft riots in New York City where for a time no Negro dared show his face on the streets.

Under orders from the military, which had already assumed power of life and death over the coastal zones, a roundup of nisei, Germans, and Italians began. All of them were considered security risks. Austrians, Austro-Hungarians, and Koreans, curiously enough, went unmolested, even those unable to prove citizenship.

Roosevelt himself, the champion of human rights, bowed under overwhelming pressure and signed an order that left not a shred of doubt that the War Department could rule wide areas, of its own designation, with the mailed fist of martial law. With this the last barricade of physical freedom and self-respect for many American citizens who had the misfortune to "look like foreigners" crumbled.

As newspaperman Marquis Childs observed, this was "an extraordinary cession of power, with far-reaching implications of which most Americans are entirely unaware."

Weekend raids in California and Texas, faintly reminiscent of the Gestapo's midnight knocks, snared as many as seven hundred

nisei at a time, a few Germans, and a scattering of Italian fishermen. Poorly clad, hungry, accorded insufficient time to pack, whole families were sent to live "for their safety" at Tule Lake and Manzanar, in California, at Fort Lincoln, Bismarck, North Dakota, and other areas where resettlement camps were hastily knocked together.

Manzanar, in southern California's Owens River Valley, became home to seven thousand. The largest of the camps, it included a decidedly striking assortment of "guests." They ranged all the way from fruit-stand merchants to high-paid Hollywood butlers, a few actors (both good and bad), and even a United States Army hero of World War I. The latter's incarceration underscored in unmistakably dazzling colors the idiocy of the whole procedure.

While the nisei had at least theoretically the choice of voluntarily emigrating from the seashore and coastal valleys of California across the mountain ranges, residents of other areas as far east as Denver did not want them. They were sent from their homes by the trainload, a tragic and altogether incongruous spectacle in a land whose benignity and lofty purpose had long ago been exalted at the base of the Statue of Liberty:

Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore,
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me

All along the coast, factory communities and fertile valleys were stripped of sorely needed workers. It was a case of nose-biting-off spitefulness. Ever since the railroad builders nearly a century ago had commenced to encourage the wholesale migration of cheap Oriental labor, there had been antagonism on the West Coast and in the West toward the Asians. Small shop owners especially feared and resented competition from industrious Chinese and Japanese.

Now, the selfish-minded could rejoice in the foolish belief that there would be no further challenge to easy profit—certainly not for the duration.

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New York City set out to register "foreigners." When the totals came in, census takers were horrified to learn that the huge urban area harbored upwards of half a million aliens. Nothing was or could be done except in the case of a negligible percentage certified by the Department of Justice as "dangerous risks." The police and federal agents in Manhattan and the other boroughs could only draw in their collective breath and hope for the best in the vast majority of cases.

This complex home-front equation, involving many factors relating to the enemy, added up to one outstanding need: an effective civil defense organization. If, for example, it were cast in the image of Great Britain's successful home guard, it would not only protect people against real dangers but aid in dispelling panic like that which gripped the West Coast a few hours after the Pearl Harbor attack.

Such an agency, the Office of Civil Defense, already existed, but it was stumbling pitifully in attempting to take its first hesitant steps. Its director was Mayor La Guardia who, one would have supposed, already had quite enough to do as mayor of the nation's largest city. The infant OCD was one of a number of federal emergency committees, offices, authorities, administrations, and boards organized before the attack on Pearl Harbor. All, however, had set up typewriter desks, file cabinets, and the familiar governmental "organization charts" under the assumption that the United States would first be locked in a death grip with Nazi Germany, whatever the incendiary spark. The impertinence of the Japanese had somehow not been envisioned.

The initial efforts of the Office of Civilian Defense met with reasonable success. In Marion County, Indiana, for example, twelve thousand citizens answered the call. From school children to octogenarians, they volunteered as block wardens, nurse's aides, auxiliary police and firemen, and undertook many other duties, including baby-sitting, typing, and acting as messengers and even janitors.

"There'll be no Pearl Harbor here if work and organization has anything to do with it," a Marion County OCD organizer asserted.

New England hammered together 1,287 local OCD councils overnight, while the 168-year-old Massachusetts Committee on Public Safety organized a home guard. Middle-aged businessmen, in addition to more obvious and perfunctory tasks, were handed a manual on guerrilla warfare. Overnight, apparently, the readers were to be converted into masters of the garrote and stiletto—if the invaders' boots ever echoed over the cobblestones of Back Bay or Newton Upper Falls.

Positive and constructive reactions to civilian defense were, however, spotty and often desultory. The Midwest, far removed even from the war at sea and more concerned with factory construction and agriculture, made a generally dismal showing in the early months of the war. Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin combined, for example, could only whip up sufficient local enthusiasm to form an inconsequential 251 local defense councils. And the councils themselves were intended to be but the nuclei of functioning organizations that were yet to be assembled.

It was true, also, that the Midwest, where isolationist sentiment had been the strongest since the outbreak of the war in Europe, needed some time to warm up to the ugly reality of the time. On the other hand, from the standpoint of manpower, this big, major segment of the nation showed from the start that it would repeat its World War I and Civil War performance in sending forth its sons to fight.

Nonetheless, it was difficult to convince the good citizens of Crossroad, Indiana, that they should place sand buckets and, possibly, stirrup pumps under their attic roofs—to say nothing of sitting up in some church steeple the chilly night through, holding a pair of binoculars and staring at a frosty sky, entirely blank except for the stars. It all seemed ridiculous to such townsfolk, as possibly it was.

Opposition or, at best, apathy was not wholly confined to one geographical region. Block wardens, wearing their distinctive armbands, had a difficult time almost everywhere in getting the inhabitants to take practice blackouts seriously. They were greeted with quips, invited to join parties in progress, or more often, totally ignored. The attitude with which these conscien-

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tious volunteers were greeted was little different from what church canvassers or solicitors for charity funds have long come to expect. They experienced an invariable sense of relief if, at least, they were tolerated.

The above-average-income taxpayers of Westchester County, New York, proved so obdurate that a campaign was drummed up to encourage prayer and hymn singing during the air-raid and blackout drills. The optimistic, if perhaps not wholly realistic, civil-defense chairmen and chairwomen hoped thereby to bring the public into a more sober and receptive frame of mind.

The spark, however, which caused the OCD its worst trouble was the selection of Eleanor Roosevelt to head the Community and Volunteer Participation Service of the Physical Fitness Division. This well-meaning, enthusiastic, and vigorous First Lady might have caused no unusual stir by herself, but she had the misfortune to make two controversial appointments.

Mayris Chaney, member of the San Francisco ballroom dance team of Chaney and Fox, was named to a \$4,600-a-year post as director of a physical-fitness program for children. The pretty dancer, who had performed before royalty, had been a friend and protégée of Mrs. Roosevelt's ever since she entered the White House. In the mid-thirties, by way of appreciation, Miss Chaney had introduced a step she named the "Eleanor Glide," somewhat inspired by London's the Lambeth Walk although it never approximated the latter's popularity.

Congress was already rumbling over the selection of a "strip-teaser," inappropriate as the label was, to a role in the war effort when Melvyn Douglas appeared in Washington. Mrs. Roosevelt had selected the popular actor to head the Arts Council, dealing with the theater, writers, and artists. Although Douglas declared that his salary was a dollar a year, some legislators insisted it was closer to ten thousand dollars. They were doubtless exaggerating.

More damning to suspicious minds was Douglas' support of the Loyalists in the Spanish Civil War. The American Legion, too, had long disapproved of the actor's identification with "liberal" causes.

He was, the lawmakers charged, one of the Administration's "parasites . . . leeches," a guest at Eleanor Roosevelt's "pink tea parties." Soon, the Congressmen's anger boiled to the point where they blocked the use of federal funds for "instructions in physical fitness by dancers, fan dancing, street shows, theatrical performances or other public entertainment."

Jane Seaver, attractive 1941 Mount Holyoke graduate, was imported to work with Girl and Boy Scouts and other young groups. (Now Mrs. James Russell of Arlington, Virginia, she confesses that much of OCD was "pretty far out.")

When the Congressmen discovered that there were no less than sixty-two coordinators for physical fitness within OCD, including such unwarlike sports as quoits, horseshoe pitching, Ping-Pong, and table tennis, their rage was unsuppressible. Newspaper columnists themselves jumped heels first into the free-for-all.

"Half the trouble around [OCD]," wrote Raymond Clapper, "could be got rid of if the President would haul Mrs. Roosevelt out of the place."

And the normally restrained Walter Lippmann flayed "Mrs. Roosevelt's talent for sugar-coating the matter with all manner of fads, fancies, homilies and programs which would have been appropriate to the activities of an excited village-improvement society."

But neither of these pundits bagged the biggest quarry within range. They had forgotten to mention the head of the physical-fitness program, John B. Kelly, former Olympic sculling champion and Philadelphia millionaire, who later achieved fame as the father of the movie star who became Princess Grace of Monaco.

From the start, his enthusiasm gushed forth like an Old Faithful of athletics as *he* interpreted athletics. He wanted in Mayris Chaney's department, "rhythmics, mass tap dancing, ballet and gymnastics in a large panorama."

In his gaudy blueprints tagged "Hale America!" the big, ebullient, former champion with the scull urged golf as "one of the best forms of exercise." He expressed himself in spite of Mrs. Roosevelt's own mild suggestion that possibly the upkeep of the

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links, the necessity for greens' fees, and all the game's costly paraphernalia did not exactly qualify golf as a sport for the masses.

Warming to boxing as a solution to the ills of the young, much as a minister would to prayer, Kelly in one of his many, multi-signed press releases called upon Jack Dempsey to "preach the benefits of clean living!" He conceded that fisticuffs was a "tough game," then added that "soldiering is a tough game too!"

An obviously disgruntled employee was to chronicle in a withheld report of that period's OCD activities:

"Mrs. Roosevelt had also cautioned him [Kelly] that American parents might not like the idea of having the Government hand their children over to professional pugilists for training.

"That Kelly showed imagination in planning his program is beyond dispute. Everything which could be tortured into the making of health seemed to be held his province; although it seems odd that he did not advocate a popularizing of polo, the steeplechase or that ancient English medium of physical fitness, fox hunting."

La Guardia, already overextended as mayor of New York, agreed to almost anything in the civil-defense program—just to maintain tranquility. "Let us not stifle imagination," he observed in tacit blessing of Kelly's "Hale America."

Mrs. Roosevelt seconded Kelly's program with an airy if enigmatic "O.K." but with the reservation that "posture charts" be included for wide dissemination. She also urged Americans of all ages to indulge in "some type of physical activity on two or three nights a week." For their areas of "activity" she suggested the churches. Almost as an afterthought, she proposed that "three hours a week," concurrently perhaps, be "devoted to mass worship."

She proclaimed a "Dance-for-Health Week" that would commence on April third. Then the First Lady set an example by organizing folk dances during coffee breaks and lunch hours in the enameled corridors of OCD headquarters. This was a commandeered apartment building on Dupont Circle, bordering "Em-

bassy Row." She not only arranged the dances; she often led them.

When word filtered down Connecticut Avenue and then along Pennsylvania Avenue to the Capitol itself, the reaction was much the same as that after a lit powder trail has sparked into the dynamite keg.

"Boondoggling!" screamed the Congressmen. "This deadly serious problem is just an excuse for another social experiment!"

Republican Representative Phil A. Bennett of Missouri proposed sarcastically that if "fan dancing" were necessary for the defense effort, why not hire a "pro—Sally Rand, for a salary of \$25,000?"

"They can't dig any skeletons out of my closet!" Mayris Chaney retorted, asserting that she was *not* familiar with fan dancing. Anyhow, she added, tongue in cheek, "Such a program was not suitable for children's activities."

The tornado of words and accusations reached a crescendo when it was discovered that the Treasury Department was contracting with Walt Disney to produce an \$80,000 short film in which Donald Duck would quack his explanation of the income tax. It was tailored to follow other Disney cartoons on war bond sales.

Congressmen of limited imagination dubbed Mayris Chaney and Melvyn Douglas "Donald Duck appointments." It mattered not to these critics that the Treasury Department had no connection at all with OCD and less, if possible, with Mrs. Roosevelt. But it was enough to force Mrs. Roosevelt, Melvyn Douglas, and Mayris Chaney to resign.

"The whole episode was unfortunate," was the First Lady's wistful reflection. "I had been reluctant to take the job . . . the mounting wave of attack in Congress finally convinced me that I was not going to be able to do a real job in the OCD . . . by remaining I would only make it possible for those who wish to attack me. . . to attack an agency which I consider can prove its usefulness."

Douglas himself noted in valedictory, "The personal attack on

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me has broadened into a generalized attack on a fundamental issue: whether or not thousands of loyal Americans who work in the creative or entertainment world shall because of their profession be denied the privilege of helping to win this war."

Miss Chaney returned to dancing and volunteer work in San Francisco's Stage Door Canteen. Time, however, would not assuage her wounds. Now Mrs. Hershey Martin, a Beverly Hills newspaperwoman, she has written the author:

"I feel that the children's program had great potential. Who knows, if young people had been taken off the streets, supervised, encouraged to work and study there might have been less delinquency during the many years that have ensued?

"Had the program been encouraged, even taken up by other agencies rather than used as a political football, our postwar generation might have been reaping great benefits. Nothing about thousands of young men being slaughtered during the fall of Singapore while Congress fought for two days over Mayris Chaney has ever been in the least bit amusing to me. Perhaps I just lack a sense of humor."

La Guardia was supplanted by a dynamic individual who exuded confidence that he could unearth any "usefulness" intrinsic within the amorphous creation, then "prove it." Aged forty-three, James M. Landis, former dean of the Harvard Law School, early brain-truster, and Securities and Exchange Commission director, inherited what Mrs. Roosevelt described as "a pretty prickly problem." The lean, generally humorless protégé of Felix Frankfurter (and one of the jurist's "little hot dogs," lawyers quipped) declared that "readiness for defense, like war itself, is total . . . the greatest trouble with Civilian Defense is that the people have not awakened to the fact that the United States is at war."

Landis was not alone in this opinion. General Hugh S. Johnson, the former blood-and-thunder NRA (National Recovery Administration) administrator, put it more strongly. He charged, "The general public, . . . simply does not seem to give a tinker's damn!"

Edward R. Murrow, the CBS commentator back from Lon-

don for a national tour, concluded that most Americans acted "as spectators with an inadequate understanding of our own responsibility . . . we have not yet acquired the habit of world leadership. Some of us are reluctant to accept the greatness that has been thrust upon us."

The convulsions within the civil-defence agency did have their positive values. In the wake of Pearl Harbor and subsequent defeats and revelations of crass blundering, they served as electric shocks for the shattered national psyche.

"The country," wrote Breckinridge Long, Assistant Secretary of State, in an unpublished diary, "is just waking up. At first it was incredulous—then stunned. Now it is getting mad. The danger is it may turn on the administration. Pearl Harbor has passed. The *Normandie* made them just plain mad. Press and the people turned on La Guardia and Mrs. Roosevelt.

"The Congress may turn on the President and on some of the 'fringe' in office. It just might be very bad—and I will do everything I can to stop it . . . the truth is the administration is not to blame for our unpreparedness, for the apathy of the people, for the Lindbergh philosophy which was so popular, for our general selfishness and softness. It was, and still is, part of a national state of mind."

As the new head of OCD, Landis got off to a fair start. No longer did the halls of the Dupont Circle building echo to the whine of fiddle recordings and the click of heels as secretary and boss wheeled to the rustic rhythm of folk dancing. He concentrated on fundamentals: air-raid shelters, sirens, white hats, armbands, stirrup pumps, sand buckets—all the tools associated with disaster attacking the home front.

To prove that his organization meant business, Landis publicized preparedness. But here again the withering hand of absurdity poked forth from the closet. Photographs and bulletins released to the press dramatized such unlikely fire fighters as the Franciscan Monks from Our Lady of Angels Monastery, in Cleveland, and the caretakers of Mount Vernon.

The well-frocked monks were depicted shoveling sand onto sputtering models of incendiary bombs. The Mount Vernon

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Ladies' Association, according to the news item, had not only equipped the magnificent home, for which they were the trustees, with emergency fire protection but installed a "hot" line to the nearby Alexandria Fire Department.

The good women boasted they could carry all the historic treasures, except for the heavy furniture, to the basement or to other shelters in fifteen minutes flat. Period costumes would not be worn for the duration. Floor-length ruffled skirts or tight knee breeches would do nothing to hasten the flight of candelabra, cut glass, paintings, and an assortment of priceless antiques to the cellar. Outside Mount Vernon, within hearing of residents for miles along this picturesque bend of the Potomac River, one of the loudest new sirens was installed. It was nicknamed, not without inspiration, "Screaming Mamie." According to some, the sobriquet was in memory of the designer's wife.

In New York City, the Museum of Modern Art rushed to make ready against the concussion of aerial bombs. Its many windows were taped, just as London window panes had been taped more than two years earlier.

But in the furor of the moment it was quite overlooked that neither the Nazis nor the Japanese possessed a heavy bomber with an effective radius of much more than one thousand miles. Nor did the absurdity of selecting either Our Lady of Angels Monastery or Mount Vernon as targets of even the lowest priority dim the fevered apprehension. And these were but two of many defense phantasms. Buildings in New York may more reasonably have been considered in a target area—still, *who* could bomb them?

The nation's capital also took precautions. False terraces bulldozed up on the White House lawns concealed antiaircraft batteries. If just one gun had been fired, every window in the White House and surrounding government buildings would have been shattered. Still more AA guns as well as laboriously fabricated dummies were mounted atop a perimeter of high structures—to afford the illusion of "a bristling defense."

A steam shovel disgorged chunks of earth and sod on the east end of the White House grounds. When this operation was fin-

ished, the President and his staff had available an air-raid shelter as commodious and luxurious as anything short of the RAF's underground command post in London or Hitler's Berlin bunker. The Chief Executive could live and conduct business there for an indefinite period, aided by all the accouterments native to his customary offices.

Meanwhile, upwards of eleven million volunteers were needed as an OCD spokesman put it, "to prepare 130 million people for self-preservation." The goal was still not much past the halfway mark. Among the ranks recruited were the following:

Not quite three hundred thousand "medical personnel," including home nurses and hospital aides—this was less than two thirds of the goal.

Approximately seven hundred thousand block wardens: It seemed to the OCD that there would never be enough women and older men to blow their whistles in the black of night.

Four hundred thousand auxiliary firemen.

Half a million other "protectors," including guards for highways and waterways, reservoirs, forests, petroleum storage tanks, docks, warehouses, and for the many public buildings that also fell within its bailiwick. The volunteers were not armed, however, and had to rely on their own strength or stout clubs to enforce their commands upon intruders.

The civilian volunteers responded with unfailing spirit and vigor during various emergencies. A flood of the Ohio and Allegheny rivers, inundating parts of Pittsburgh and other cities, proved the tenacity of a hundred thousand volunteer civil-defense workers. Working side by side with professionals, many did yeoman service, toiling two or three days at a time without sleep.

On a misty June morning in 1942, the citizens of Provincetown, Massachusetts, historically accustomed to harvesting the flotsam of the sea, turned out to help ashore the survivors of a torpedoed Allied merchantman. Summoned by the air-raid siren, inhabitants of this town at Cape Cod's very tip quickly rushed blankets and stretchers to the water's edge. Pitching tents on broad, sandy beaches and on the sides of towering dunes, the

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New Englanders brewed thousands of cups of coffee, heated hundreds of meals, and spread sandwich after sandwich.

Doctors, nurses, canteen workers, auxiliary police, block wardens, and other Civilian Defense volunteers had answered the alarm. Landis was so impressed that he publicly commended the little fishing village, better known to summer visitors as an artist colony.

Civil defense bit by bit rolled up an inventory of more than \$52,000,000 worth of equipment—needed or not needed. But more and more it seemed as though a capricious fate were determined that Landis' tenure would witness but further acts in the Gilbert and Sullivan farce already premiered.

Unfortunately a plethora of projects marched forth from the seemingly infinite catacombs of Landis' active mind. He organized classes for veteran truck drivers. Here the former Harvard Law School dean met with sturdy opposition. Telling these capable individuals of the highway how to drive, even in convoy, was analogous to reviewing the scales for a Paderewski.

Other "teachers" from OCD discussed the repair of utility poles with longtime telephone and electric-light company linesmen, while even priests, ministers, and rabbis were briefed on giving spiritual aid and comfort to the wounded and dying. Surely every contingency was provided for.

The "block plan" was to prove Landis' Waterloo. The catastrophe was not especially surprising since the block warden was heaped with duties and prerogatives which far exceeded his normal role. In addition to calling attention to offending lights or reminding that air-raid drills were in progress, he or she was supposed to encourage housewives to save fats, conserve sugar, help draw up car pools, provide the counsel of a veteran agronomist on the culture of victory gardens, and even boom the WAVES and WACS to eligible young females.

To many legislators, especially Republicans, these wardens appeared to be the American equivalent of block "fuehrers," or leaders, in Nazi-governed towns and cities. The wardens seemed to be assuming an ever-encroaching role in the nation's home life, barely stopping short of changing the diapers of the block's

infants. Alarmists feared their next step would be to call the political tune for their captive wards.

Now Capitol Hill sniffed out a sinister plot, by Landis, aided and abetted by a "Goebbels-like" propaganda ministry. Of course, theorized the more excitable, the government was printing political propaganda pamphlets while OCD's block wardens, like swastikaed storm troopers, were distributing them—possibly at bayonet point.

Representative Carl Curtis, Nebraska Republican, stormed in early 1943, "A year ago we had to step in and abolish fan dancing. This year we have had to step in and abolish fellow travelers!"

It did not help matters when the Communist newspaper, the *Daily Worker*, congratulated the OCD for opposing "reactionary" congressmen. This was a "Red" sore spot with the former law-school dean. The American Legion, in particular, had been seeking his scalp as "the man who engineered the whitewashing of Harry Bridges." The basis for this charge was a past finding by Landis as a White House-appointed arbiter, that the radical labor leader had not been proven to be a member of the Communist Party.

Possibly the kindest remark in the new outsurge of congressional rage was that of Representative J. William Ditter, Pennsylvania Republican, who conceded, "Dr. Landis may be the victim of his own innocence and his own ignorance of the realities of life."

With an enrollment of more than five million volunteers, the size of OCD was staggering. Easily its most precocious and effective offspring, the Civil Air Patrol, was snatched away by the Army in April 1943. Its eighty thousand pilots and ground personnel kept forty-five hundred light planes flying. They performed many missions, from guarding the lonely lengths of power lines and pipelines to towing artillery targets, flying blood plasma, and searching for U-boats in coastal waters.

Frederick J. Lyon, sixty-four, private pilot of a Connecticut patrol wing, had been rejected as overage for the Army Air Service in 1916; he went to France as a captain in the Engineers in-

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stead. After almost daily flights over Long Island Sound and out past the foggy shoals off Montauk Point and Block Island, his vigil was once rewarded. Below the fabric and plywood wings of his airplane appeared an unmistakable, elongated shadow sweeping up on a tanker's wake. Lyon's radio call brought a patrol boat, an Army as well as a Navy bombing plane, and a blimp to the scene. The result was a "probable" kill and another vessel enabled to deliver its needed cargo.

The experience of this past-middle-age pilot was not unusual in the CAP records. Before writing finis to its war activities the CAP spotted 173 unidentified submarines and radioed the first information on 363 survivors in lifeboats or rafts from torpedoed vessels.

But civil defense was doomed. Not even the reflected glory of the CAP could relieve its top-heavy, bumbling parent. Landis resigned in August 1943. Five months later the Bureau of the Budget cut the agency's appropriation below eight hundred thousand dollars.

With a skeleton staff, like the night guards at some vast but nearly empty warehouse, the OCD limped along, failing, decrepit, abandoned. No one wanted it; no one cared. In the spring of 1944, this hard-luck offspring of war joined the WPA, CCC and NRA—all once lusty, squawling progeny of the New Deal consigned to oblivion.

Epitaphs—most critical, some derisive, almost none of them kind or even nostalgic—were penned. Among the more reflective was this by Henry F. Pringle:

"Some of the activities of O.C.D. seem faintly foolish now, so swift is the pace of modern war . . . the blackouts and dim-outs, the air raid drills, the boxes of sand and the pails of water are the remnants of a gigantic false alarm. O.C.D. was the home-front agency. It stimulated rubber, tin, paper and aluminum salvage drives. It encouraged first-aid training—the peril of husbands who had to submit to practice bandages and splints. O.C.D. served a double purpose. Through it millions of Americans, anxious to participate in the war, found useful outlets for their energies."

CHAPTER 4

A Giant's Yawn

THE PITIFUL EXPERIENCE of the Office of Civilian Defense was all too symbolic of the country's unreadiness for war.

At the time of the invasion of Poland, America had 70 per cent of the world's automobiles, 53 per cent of its telephones, half of its radios, and electric or gas refrigerators in six million homes. Having just experienced a terrible economic depression, many Americans may have regarded themselves as poor. But compared to the rest of the world, the nation's standard of living was opulent. Not until the Japanese planes swooped low over Diamond Head did this wealth suddenly leave a bitter taste. America's unpreparedness was revealed in frightening terms.

The Navy was an unenviable third in international rating, surpassed by Great Britain and Japan in that order. The Army, swelled by Selective Service to 1,500,000 men, was raw and unfit for Nazi-style battle. The glib threat by the more ferocious of Hitler's marshals that they would tear whole American armies into little pieces did not seem totally implausible to some who reflected on Poland, on Holland, on France, and on Russia.

The cream of 1941's aircraft—20,000 planes—had flapped off to Great Britain and the Soviet Union like a migration of mechanical geese. America's Army Air Corps, denuded, sputtered ahead with barely a thousand so-called combat aircraft. According to the corps' commanding general, H. H. ("Hap") Arnold, these planes were "obsolete," lacking sufficient firepower and

armament, as well as such innovations as self-sealing fuel tanks. The Navy with somewhat more modern planes, nonetheless, had a count of only 850 able and ready to zoom confidently into battle.

An unimpressive 4,300 tanks clanked sometimes ahead, more often behind the infantry. This was our plodding armored corps, a joke to the Germans who could hurl that many into a single engagement. The Army was so short of these "land cruisers" that Renaults from World War I had to be towed behind trucks in maneuvers to afford the soldiers an idea of what tanks really looked like. When even these did not total up to impressive numbers, ranks were filled out by Ford trucks with big cardboard placards: TANK.

The more cynical sergeants and corporals obtained the impression that these signs, no matter how big or how black the letters, would not fool the Nazis, maybe not even the Japs, who Americans had been led to believe over the years, were pretty stupid.

Neither the rapid-firing BAR rifle nor the far more rapid Garand were being produced in sufficient quantities to replace World War I Springfield and Enfield rifles. And even the tin helmet that father wore in the Meuse-Argonne remained in fashion for his 1942 counterpart, "G. I. Joe."

European orders for arms during the two years before Pearl Harbor had helped American industry prepare for the tremendous job to come, although the volume had fluctuated with the mood of Congress and changes in our neutrality laws—laws which by the end of 1941 wholly belied the definition of that term. Automobile manufacturers, for example, commenced tooling up in the spring of 1940. They built additional plants for airplanes and aircraft engines, largely for foreign consignment. Chrysler, a major recipient of early defense orders, earmarked \$20,000,000 for the development of a tank arsenal.

Although an ambitious building program had commenced, the Navy was compelled to get under way aboard World War I battleships. Cumbersome, slow and armored in the wrong places for

defense in the air age, they went down at Pearl Harbor like target rafts. The fleet was slowed by too many similar relics: four-stack destroyers like the ill-fated *Jacob Jones*; cruisers whose firepower could not approximate that of the Germans' ultramodern *Prinz Eugen*, for example; and Henry Ford's Eagle boats, which came off the assembly line just too late in 1918.

Shore "facilities," as naval administrators tagged their yards, bases, and airfields, were just as inadequate. While air-training centers to mass-produce pilots, such as that at Corpus Christi, Texas, were mushrooming on American soil, the Navy lacked drydock footage. It also urgently needed no less than seven hundred new depots to stock more than four million different items in the corner cupboard of naval supplies.

To meet the demands of war, oil production would have to soar from a daily 3,842,000 barrels to nearly 5,000,000.

"The war abroad," asserted Alfred P. Sloan, Jr., chairman of the board of General Motors, "can only be won on the American industrial front. The American production plant is obsolete."

Donald M. Nelson, a big, bulky man and former president of Sears, Roebuck and Company, assumed in January 1942 the all-important directorship of the War Production Board. The organization, emerging from earlier agencies in the "defense" period before Pearl Harbor, was all-powerful, supreme among the emergency departments of the federal government.

This was the "get-it-done" outfit, charged with seeing that the armed forces obtained all they needed. It could allocate, obtain priorities, or divert the entire output of, for example, a mine or a factory to one shipyard if need arose. If there was trouble, WPB had an ally with sharp teeth: the Justice Department.

"Just ahead of us," said Donald Nelson, "are the hardest years we have been through since Valley Forge . . . we're going to build so many planes and tanks that when this is all over those of us who had anything to do with it are going to be criticized because we built too much."

Nelson could appreciate that business was "reluctant to stop peacetime production and convert their factories to war use."

But once the gauntlet was thrown down, industry simply had to pick it up. Fortunately the American production plant was not quite as obsolete as Sloan had gloomily labeled it.

Modern factories were not oddities to the West Coast, the Midwest, or the industrial Northeast. These could be converted to war production or spawn complexes of new plants tailored to the demands of the military machine.

"A company which had canned citrus fruit," Nelson was to report, "began to make parts for merchant ships. A grower and shipper of ferns learned to manufacture bomb chutes. Manufacturers made guns who had a few months earlier made machinery for processing cotton. A maker of mechanical pencils turned out bomb parts and precision instruments. Mosquito netting became the chief product of a bedspread manufacturer. A soft-drink company, which knew all about loading bottles with liquid, went into the business of loading shells with explosives."

He might have added to his random selection the shoe manufacturer who turned from lasts to small cannon, the oil-burner company that fabricated fire-control systems and landing gear, the textile mill that began "spinning" howitzers, or the burial-vault builder who converted to hundred-pound bombs. The latter changeover was grimly appropriate, although the company's specialty was probably just as essential with an annual civilian need for a quarter of a million of such vaults.

Shipyards expanded with dizzying speed. Bethlehem Steel, for example, increased its prewar labor force of seven thousand men thirtyfold in thirteen yards along the Atlantic and Pacific coasts. Production was speeded by subcontracting to plants that might be all the way across the continent from some particular shipway. Arthur Bartlett Homer, a World War I submarine officer, supplied much of the impetus in Bethlehem. The corporation's vice-president in charge of shipbuilding was an executive of twenty-five years' experience who believed in delegation of authority.

"Every yard manager," he explained, "was a key man in his home. Bethlehem policy is to give each man his head and see

how far he can go. I was here to encourage them and help keep them out of trouble."

Henry J. Kaiser was another giant when it came to mass production of almost anything. Kaiser was so ingrained a landlubber that he spoke of ships' "front ends," of their "floors" and "windows." Nonetheless, he created in a very few months fifty-eight shipways in seven massive new shipyards. In them he introduced prefabrication at an unheard-of 60 per cent rate. And when he ran out of steel, he built his own steel mill in San Bernardino, California.

Liberty ships, the "ugly duckling" cargo carriers, and in lesser quantities, transports, tankers, and "baby" aircraft carriers, which were his special contribution to the science of submarine killing, slid off his bustling ways.

Before 1942 was quite out, the sixty-year-old Kaiser ¹ invited reporters to his Richmond, California, yard to observe the assembly of a freighter: *Hull 440*, the *Robert E. Peary*. By the end of the first day, eighteen thousand feet of steel had been welded, and the hull was complete. Prefabrication had speeded this process, even to fittings and the nameplate on the bow.

A writer, Alyce Mano Kramer, described the scene:

" . . . Yard Two became hushed in the silent awe that precedes the most critical engagement. Her people had publicly promised America a second home front in the form of the fastest shipbuilding job in history.

"At the stroke of 12, Way One exploded into life. Crews of workers, like a champion football team, swarmed to their places in the line. Within 60 seconds, the keel was swinging into position. . . . *Hull 440* was going up.

"The speed of erection was unbelievable. At midnight, Saturday, an empty way—at midnight, Sunday, a full-grown hull met

¹ Kaiser, at sixty, was a relative youngster among the wartime leaders of government and industry. The majority were men in their late sixties or early seventies. Sloan, for example, was seventy-five at war's onset; Eugene Grace, the head of Bethlehem, sixty-five; Secretary of War Stimson, seventy-five; Cordell Hull, seventy; and Frank Knox, sixty-eight.

the eyes of graveyard workers as they came on shift. . . . Feverish, yet sure and methodical, was the march against time. Orders were explicit, work was controlled, muscles were strained, hearts were bursting with hope and pride. . . ."

Engines went in the second day, and on the third, "whirly" cranes placed the *Peary's* superstructure, including masts and funnel, into place. Wiring and piping were completed on the fourth day. The last tasks were done at night under the glare of lights. Such accessories as clocks and railings went just where the blueprints said they should go, and the rich, acrid odor of paint attested to *Hull 440's* final "facials."

Before the end of the ninety-six hours of the four-day goal, the newest Liberty ship slid down the ways—in full view of twenty-five thousand highly impressed spectators who nonetheless half expected her to sink beneath the muddy waters. *How* could something that had been built so fast float?

The answer lay not only in prefabrication and engineering prowess but in the speed with which workers learned and performed wartime jobs. Among Kaiser's four hundred thousand employees was a girl garment alterer who turned to trimming freighter bulkheads. An ex-wrestler had become a "flanger," one who "persuades" stubborn sheets of metal into place through brute strength.

Cast from the same mold as Henry J. Kaiser—and, as a matter of fact, of the same age—was Andrew Jackson Higgins, who created a snub-nosed landing craft in 1930—long before there was a need for it. The "Eureka" boat, as he first named it, was to become an indelible memory for any Allied soldier who ever hit a beachhead. A former Omaha truck driver whose ambition and ability led him during World War I to operate one of the world's largest sailing-ship fleets, Higgins was already making his landing craft in quantity production for the British at the time of Pearl Harbor. The gruff-spoken industrialist quickly earned the sobriquet of "The-Hell-It-Can't" Higgins, because of his spirited retort to Navy purchasing officers who questioned his ability to produce a sample lighter in three days.

"I operate in a big way and don't give a damn about money,"

he observed. His two New Orleans plants—one near City Park, with the assembly line on what had formerly been a residential street, and the other along the Industrial Canal—employed eighty thousand workers. Higgins, thus, carried New Orleans' largest payroll.

He had constructed a ten million dollar yard at nearby Michoud for Liberty ships when allocations of steel were curtailed. Possibly by chance, possibly through "Andy's" acute political acumen, President Roosevelt happened by the wholly deserted plant. The waste and idleness shocked the Commander in Chief who arranged for a large C-46 cargo-plane contract to be awarded Higgins. Always flexible, the boatbuilder converted the empty sheds to aircraft production.

Roosevelt's satisfaction with Higgins was seconded by his top field commander, General Eisenhower. Following the North African landings, an enthusiastic "Ike" cabled the New Orleans boatbuilder that he "praised God" for the Higgins landing craft.

Shipways to aircraft factories—American industry had never experienced such an overnight metamorphosis. Buildings changed their character and their purpose often with dizzying speed. A large skating rink in Williamsport, Pennsylvania, for example, assumed the new look before townspeople even realized what was happening. Patrons of this establishment arrived one night as usual, skates over shoulders, to find the doors locked although it was strangely bright inside. A "U.S. Government" sign proclaimed that the rink, in effect, had rolled off to war.

Later the same week uniforms definitely not belonging to the United States Armed Forces appeared in this medium-sized Lycoming Valley city. The British had "invaded" Williamsport. The newcomers were representatives of the Admiralty, supervising orders for special torpedo nets for merchant ships. Soon the clang of heavy machinery echoed where before there had been the hum of roller skates and the lilting sound of waltz music. A wire-rope subsidiary of Bethlehem Steel had effected the transformation.

The process of wartime creation was not, however, always this smooth or rapid. On the fringes of Chicago, rains combined with

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a loss of steel priority to delay the building of a plant for B-29 engines week after week; it was impossible to pour the cement, which had been substituted for the metalwork. Finally spirits sank so low that a Chrysler Corporation executive, Lester L. Colbert, journeyed to the dismal site—a quagmire. "If I hear anyone say, 'this plant won't be built . . . this engine won't run . . . this ship won't fly . . . or this plane won't win the war,' I'm going to ask for his resignation immediately!" he promised. The massive structure was finally built. It ultimately made amends for a late, uncertain start by fabricating more than eighteen thousand engines.

Slightly to the north, a shipyard on Lake Michigan, at Manitowoc, Wisconsin, completed the first major naval vessel to be constructed on the Great Lakes. The 1,500-ton submarine *Peto*, launched sideways, arrived at its base in New London, Connecticut, after a roundabout journey which commenced on Lake Michigan and the Illinois River, continued down the Mississippi and to the Gulf of Mexico, then up the Atlantic Coast.

Factory life itself, as industry struggled to pick up steam, took on new aspects. Douglas Aircraft's huge plant at Santa Monica, California, increased its "population" by increments of tens of thousands so rapidly that personnel officers were hard pressed to keep an accurate daily tally. The company's publication, *Airview*, wrote in the early months of the effort:

Population tripled in two years!

Few American towns can claim such a record, yet it actually has been achieved by a city within a city.

How big is 'our town'? Large enough that its covered working area alone approximates 1,500,000 square feet. Large enough, too, that modernizing of its lighting system required 8000 of the new mercury vapor lamps! When that order was placed the astonished manufacturer declared it was one of the largest contracts for such lamps ever signed in any country.

So vast has Santa Monica plant become that it recently was necessary to mark it off into streets and avenues, with appropriate signs placed at the intersections. Starting in the northwest corner of the factory, the aisles running north and south are numbered as streets, and aisles east and west are lettered as avenues.

Production created hundreds of thousands of new jobs—one seemingly constructive aspect of war. It virtually knocked out unemployment, estimated at nearly six million jobless in 1939, and the recession which had roosted vulturelike over Roosevelt's entire second term. Almost anyone who so desired could obtain some sort of job, if only sweeping factory floors.

Engaged in war production by 1944 were 17,500,000 persons, nearly triple the comparable figure of early 1941. With a goal of almost 8,000,000 more men and women, skilled labor remained necessarily "a little tight."

A new draft turned up 13,000,000 additional males between the ages of forty-five and sixty-four who had not before been required to register. None was qualified for the front lines, or necessarily for activity more strenuous than that of block warden. The fire-and-brimstone philosophy of "work or fight," which echoed and reechoed stentorially throughout World War I, was discarded as wholly unrealistic. A man dragged off to the camps was as spiritless and ineffectual as one who was forced to sit by a lathe with the threat of prison bars or worse as his only motivation.

Giants of industry, anxious to keep their own plants staffed, repeatedly assured Selective Service it could not expect to have steel *and* soldiers, coal *and* soldiers, or tanks *and* soldiers. The tycoons, however, were wrong. With vastly improved armament, fewer fighting men were required to accomplish military objectives comparable to yesterday's.

Someone suggested "alien" labor be utilized. The proposal was echoed by many who urged that restraints on noncitizens be lifted.

"This is a very serious matter," declared Roosevelt. "It is one thing to safeguard American industry, and particularly defense industry against sabotage; but it is very much another to throw out of work honest and loyal people who, except for the accident of birth, are sincerely patriotic. Remember the Nazi technique: 'pit race against race, religion against religion, prejudice against prejudice . . . divide and conquer!' We cannot afford the economic waste of services of all loyal and patriotic citizens and non-citizens in defending our liberties."

The laws regarding alien labor were relaxed. Next the 150,000 convicts in the nation's prisons and reformatories were allowed to work from behind their steel bars. They were to contribute nearly \$25,000,000 in war products by the end of 1944. Abandoned, however, was a scheme for creating a "Defense Prison Labor Corporation." It was just as well. The country already had enough of such emergency "corporations."

There were misdirected attempts to beef up the labor pool. Western gold miners, for example, let out a howl that carried all the way across the nation to Washington when their mines were closed by Executive order as "nonessential."

The ill-advised action at once disrupted the economy of a dozen states, as their treasuries were deprived of tax revenue. The federal government lost the support of thirty senators, including the powerful Pat McCarran of Nevada.

Almost all of the two thousand miners who were affected laid away their picks and refused to set foot in any other sort of mine. They registered for relief as displaced laborers. They were specialists, a proud lot imbued with the spirit of the sourdough of the last century. They would no more harvest coal than a racing jockey would hold the reins of a junk-wagon horse.

The ever-swelling army of labor faced a host of other problems, the need for housing being perhaps the main one. "Defense cities" sprouted like dragon's teeth in the smoky shadows of great factories, foundries, and shipyards to bed those who served a clattering world of machines.

The implications of these new cities were even more impressive than their immediate mission or scope. They altered the living habits of almost everybody, especially young married couples. In fact, their very existence served as a spur to matrimony. All at once the specter of occupying the cramped and often dingy spare bedroom with the in-laws was gone. Newlyweds could feather a nest all their own and at a low, "stabilized" rent. Here born of the war was the germ of tomorrow's urban revolution: the "self-contained" community, complete with shopping centers, fire departments, police precincts, professional people, including doctors and lawyers, sometimes hospitals, undertakers, cemeteries—a packaged plan for living, from birth to death.

One of the largest of these "instant" communities was Vanport City, four miles west of Portland—a large, if ephemeral, compound for thirty-five thousand souls from Kaiser's shipyard. Complete with theaters and churches, it grew from nothing in the late summer of 1942 beside the Columbia River to become Oregon's second largest city. The uniform one-story light frame structures, mounted on concrete blocks, rented for \$7.00 a week for a one-room apartment, with a maximum of \$11.55 for four rooms.

Reluctant at first to establish branch stores, Portland's merchants finally saw the potential in Vanport. Their signs dotted the sidewalks, one by one, like stars breaking through. It did not especially surprise the statisticians (or obstetricians) when the dry-goods line of baby clothes showed a record 87 per cent increase in sales in the entire Portland area (compared with a 34 per cent increase in the rest of the nation).

Vanport proved so popular that it became the first "satellite city" to sport its own suburb. In a few months East Vanport, mushroomed out of the swampy earth of the former Peninsula Golf Course, was home for five thousand additional shipyard workers. Like its predecessor, East Vanport was constructed by the Portland Housing Authority aided by the federal government. The builder was the owner of the shipyards that made Vanport necessary in the first place: Henry J. Kaiser.

One difficulty encountered in the Vanports arose from fires, started by electric heating and cooking appliances. Accustomed to using wood for fuel, these householders never turned off the electric switches, leaving the units to scorch and ultimately ignite whatever was adjacent. The dwellers could not easily be taught new tricks—but asbestos sheathing *could* be affixed to "critical" wall areas. And that is just what was done.

"High Point," with thirteen hundred brand-new homes, was another home front community in the Seattle area. A newly wed couple, the Robert Devines, were among the earliest to make the development's efficiency kitchens ring with the clatter of tinware together with "victory" cups and dishes, as tough and heavy as a bride's first biscuits.

"This is just right for everything," Mrs. Devine, a pretty

brunette, told a local reporter. "Not too close to the road, or too far away—sun coming in the windows, a view of the mountains. And it is my first home. I'm crazy about it."

Soon, hard hat on his head, lunch pail in hand, Bob Devine was swinging down the freshly graveled paths toward the Seattle Navy Yard. Accompanying him were an overalled army of die-stamped counterparts, his new neighbors, women as well as men.

World War I's emancipation from the kitchen was virtually complete for all women who wished it that way. By 1943 there would be slightly more than three million engaged in jobs directly related to the war. Sidney Hillman, Donald Nelson's labor chief, then called for one million more—a figure, however, which could not be obtained. Although the misnomered "weaker sex" was more than content to be elevated from a prevailing 44.5 cents an hour to the male minimum of 70.5 cents an hour, the supply of those with the required skills had been exhausted.

The aviation industry was the first to lower the so-called sex barrier to permit women to fill almost any job hitherto guarded greedily by the male as his own. The delicate, exact, and tedious work associated so closely with aircraft manufacture could be accomplished much better, it was discovered, by the female. In fact, one aircraft manufacturer so much liked the feminine way of doing things, together with the lower absenteeism rate of women, that a permanent place was reserved for them in postwar blueprints.

In Marietta, Georgia, at the age of seventy-five, the widow of Confederate General James Longstreet (who had commanded the First Corps of the Army of Northern Virginia) walked each morning from her cottage to her job on the seven o'clock shift at a Bell Aircraft bomber plant. The slim, wiry lady worked for two years without missing a day. While other mothers and grandmothers were standing in increasing numbers at assembly lines throughout the nation, the long-ago bride of "General Lee's good right arm" was more than double the average age—thirty-three—of the woman worker.

At Dover, Delaware, a medium-sized arsenal relearned the World War I lesson that women are handy at explosives produc-

tion. There fifteen hundred women were employed in every type of job: from careful analysis in the laboratories to the operation of heavy, complicated presses. Overalled feminine figures were increasingly commonplace, even in shipyards and tank arsenals.

The fight, however, was uphill. Old-guard shop foremen were ready with an impressive list of specifications as to why women should not march through factory gates. This included a supposed lack of technical understanding and an inability to do "heavy work" or even comprehend machines. Further there were not enough ladies' rest rooms—a "reason" which made the more reasonable man laugh aloud.

As it turned out, troubles experienced with the female corps arose almost solely from super feminists who would not bid adieu to high heels, who were reluctant to switch skirts for slacks, or who persisted in the prevalent peek-a-boo hairdo of actress Veronica Lake. Although a long swatch of tresses drooping over one eye and down almost to the shoulder might be fetching under the moonlight or in the boudoir, appalling things happened when hair became snagged in a whirring chunk of machinery.

Vanity, however, was not surmounted by a snap of the finger or even by that familiar wartime *sine qua non*, the directive. Posters in the wash rooms showing scalped women defeated their own purpose. They were so gruesome that the girls tore them down. The breakthrough did not come until Miss Lake, in a personal sacrifice to the national effort, was photographed with a new hairdo—a bob. Any loss in the box office or to the American male in his vicarious amours was compensated for in the assembly-line female's gain in permanency of hair and scalp.

Whatever the experiences of World War II's women in overalls, they were ones that would never be forgotten.

"It was the early part of December of 1942," wrote Mrs. Edith Long of Richmond, California, to the author, "that I made up my mind I would like to work in the shipyards. The reason I chose welding was because my husband was a welder and liked it very much. I went to the employment office. There were just lines of people waiting to get signed up in all crafts. They sent me to school for two weeks. Although I went to school on the swing

shift, you could choose your shift and yard after you finished. My choice was days and yard #4, where my husband worked. That way we went to and from work together and were home nights with our 3-year-old son.

"I'll never forget the first night at school: all them leathers! I felt like I was a deep-sea diver: jacket and overalls, hood which certainly covered your face and head. A hairdo meant nothing. You had to have your hair completely covered if you wanted any left, long gloves (up to your elbows), still those little sparks had a way of finding you.

"We learned to weld overhead which was quite hard holding your arms, stinger and enough welding lead higher than your head. Of course the longer you welded the more you could weld. I'll admit it was good exercise. Vertical wasn't so hard. A lot of time we could sit down for this. Flat—we felt we were sailing when we had to weld flat.

"School only lasted two weeks (shortest school I ever went to). After school they would take you to the yard you preferred. Gee, but those ships looked big! My first job was on the outfitting dock. They were pretty well finished. Just pick-up jobs and so. It included their names (since they had been Christened and sent down the ways into their first water. Fortunately we didn't have one to sink.)

"The first ones I worked on we stood on the upper deck and looked down. They were huge! They carried jeeps and tanks. The kitchens were all of stainless, small but beautiful. Just as you would get attached to them they went out to sea. Then we would start all over finishing another one which had been launched.

"We changed again and made escort vessels. They sent most of the women to the plate shop. That was the beginning of the ships. You could see no progress as we'd weld two pieces together. This piece was taken to the ways to be put together forming another ship. I didn't care for the shop at all. It was off to itself. As soon as I could I asked for a transfer. I was then put on the ways. It was here you could see the ship forming. We did all but the finishing touches—Christened with a bottle of champagne, sent down the ways into the water. It gave you quite a

thrill to think you were helping win the war such a small part but I was helping.

"I worked as a welder for 32 months, was one of the last women to be laid off, which was the latter part of July, 1945. It was nice to be home again, all day with our son.

"We made lots of friends, some of whom we still see . . . every once in a while. We didn't have much social life. Everything was in such a whirl and we had to save our gas coupons for emergency. Those were days in many ways we'd like to forget, but we'll always remember. . . ."

Although the American industrial scene had undergone many changes by the end of 1942, there was still much room for improvement. This was recognized by both business and government. Secretary Knox in a December speech to the National Association of Manufacturers stated:

"There have been many mistakes. There has been timidity, hesitancy, inefficiency, confusion, waste and all the other things the critics say, but contrasted to what's been accomplished I marvel there have not been more."

The year's goals had not been met: forty thousand planes where sixty-thousand had been sought; thirty-two thousand tanks, or two thirds of the quota; seventeen thousand antiaircraft guns against twenty thousand needed. But more than eight million tons of merchant shipping went down the ways, approximating the objective.

Spending had not been held back. In the first fiscal year of hostilities, twenty-six billion dollars in direct war costs surged out of the Treasury's gates. The bill was about three hundred million dollars more than the entire cost to America of World War I. Even the price tag of killing had been affected by inflation.

The expense was high, the effort great, even if, as Knox lamented, there had been misfires. But already the results were impressive, the spectacle itself often exhilarating. Sidney Shallett, of *The New York Times*, wrote:

"It is a thrilling thing to see American industry in action. In a way, it's a shame that military reasons make it impossible for everyone in the land to have a look inside a few factories, for all

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the words and pictures and movies in the world can't quite capture and convey the feeling that huge war plant in action can give you.

"The clackety-clack of acres of machines, the rat-a-tat-tat of endless rivets being driven home, the fearsomeness of giant cranes swooping overhead carrying planes, tanks and mammoth cauldrons of molten steel as if they were so many carpet tacks under a magnet; then the sight of the sleek, strong planes, the elephantine tank with their deadly cannon trunks, the millions of machinegun bullets jumping from the machines like a plague of locusts . . . well, they make you feel better!"

CHAPTER 5

“... this strange innovation”

RATIONING was incompatible with the easy American way of life. So were other controls and, of course, the censorship regulations that in normal times are so at variance with the principles of a democracy.

Such intrusions, while tolerated for the most part, nonetheless evoked sputterings of complaint from the home front during the whole length of the war. This was war, however, and a war yet more total in other countries. The long, dispassionate arm of Government dared reach into the most private and long-sacred purlieu of society.

Americans often smarted under many of the restrictions at home and the excesses of a burgeoning bureaucracy. Even so, they had to live with them. “There’s a war on,” was the wearily repeated phrase intended to explain almost everything or anything.

Citizens had to accustom themselves to an entirely different feel and look to life as they went about their wartime ways: a bustle, excitement, and prevailing new sense of purpose; the sight of military uniforms, almost everywhere, worn by male and female; the good-bye parties as younger men shut their desks and hung up their overalls for what apparently was to be a long time, and possibly forever.

For the great majority of Americans, those left behind when the transports sailed and the planes roared off towards faraway

and often bafflingly unfamiliar destinations, the war settled down to a variegated pattern of light and shade, plenty and scarcity.

There were the letters home, in an ever-swelling torrent:

"Lordy," wrote Captain George Stallings from Guadalcanal to a friend back in Augusta, Georgia, "how I wish this were all over Broad Street will be the most beautiful place in the world. I don't want to come until this job is finished but I hope we can soon finish it. You can bet we will try hard."

His sentiments, common among fighting men in distant reaches, inspired such wistful songs as "You'd Be So Nice to Come Home To," "I Left My Heart at the Stage Door Canteen," "Now Is the Hour," "I'll Never Smile Again," "I Threw a Kiss in the Ocean," "I Walk Alone," "Spring Will Be a Little Late This Year," and "I Dream of You."

Before the first winter of the war had warmed into spring, tragedy had affected a sobering number of American homes, bringing the war day by day closer to what had once been firm and familiar. Gold stars spoke their sorrowful message in more and more windows. Mrs. Walter Ward of Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and her sister Mrs. Erl Troynek were but two who would understand the price of war. Thomas F. Ward, the former's tall, handsome son and one of the first South Dakota volunteers, was about to receive his wings at the Corpus Christi Naval Air Station.

The twenty-one-year-old cadet, whose father had been killed five years earlier in a hunting accident, seemed to excel in everything: studies, athletics, cards, certainly girls, and now, flying. "Sam Slick," his friends called him, a natural pilot.

All went well until his last flight prior to graduation. High above the brackish shores and eel grass of Madre Island, just off the Texas coast, Tom Ward leveled his training plane off. He was to dive-bomb, with a flour sack as target on this uninviting tidal blob of sand and coarse vegetation.

He went down, down . . . and never pulled out. His single-engined aircraft made a bull's-eye right on the target, burying itself deep in the soft sandy soil before blowing into bits, like a bomb. Something, perhaps, had gone wrong with the controls.

Or maybe he had been affected by the hypnotic fascination of the target rushing up toward him?

Tom's mother and his aunt, who had been planning to go to his graduation, attended instead the funeral of the first Sioux Falls boy to perish in the war. Tom was buried on a bitter afternoon in Woodlawn Cemetery. Laborers had worked all the day before to shovel away the foot-deep snow and blast into the frozen earth with pneumatic drills. Spanish-American War veterans formed an honor guard, and old high school and college friends were pallbearers or solemn-faced attendants.

“I will never forget,” recalls Mrs. Troynek, now a resident of Alexandria, Virginia, “the taps—across that cold, snowy cemetery. It was all over. Everything seemed all over.”

Even Americans not intimately hurt by the war had cause to experience some of Mrs. Troynek's emptiness and sense of finality on May sixth when General Douglas MacArthur issued from Australia a terse communiqué: “General Wainwright has surrendered Corregidor and the other fortified islands in Manila Harbor.”

Amen had been scrawled to what Charles Hurd of *The New York Times* termed, “The most tragic chapter in the war since Pearl Harbor.”

Somehow, Americans never worried about actual defeat. As Thomas E. Dewey has observed to the author, “I do not recall that I ever considered the dreadful possibility that we might lose the war though, of course, we had some pretty bad periods.”

There *were* pretty bad periods, sufficient to shake public confidence in the prosecution of the struggle. One of the worst after the surrender at Manila came in the first week of August 1942 when the Navy lost three cruisers and the Australians one at the debacle of Savo Island. Certainly it made victory appear even further distant.

One man, the squat, mercurial-tempered Leon Henderson, head of the Office of Price Administration, appeared to harbor every gloomy premonition that the war would drag on, perhaps past living memory—if not into the gossamer limbo of a future generation, or even civilization. Testimony to his Jeremiah out-

look was War Rationing Book No. 1, which rolled off the presses in March 1942 after a slambang production job—190,000,000 copies, each containing twenty-eight consecutively numbered stamps. Guarded in railway postal cars like gold, these same books, rushed out initially to apportion sugar, were soon extended to include shoes and coffee. Unhappily word leaked that America's favorite drink was going under control. Within hours grocery shelves were picked clean of cans and packages of the aromatic South American coffee bean, causing a delay of weeks before allocation could commence in more orderly fashion.

The storm of protest which raged over Henderson's head had barely cleared when gasoline rationing was introduced. Three gallons a week were decreed for the nation's drivers. Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes, whose temper exploded about as quickly as the fumes of the fuel in question, at once charged that the cuts were too drastic. Ickes, who doubled as Petroleum Co-ordinator, was seconded by an oil-industry spokesman who branded the rationing as, "half-baked, ill-advised, hit or miss!"

Standing his ground, Henderson pointed out that tank-car shipments to the East, although stepped up from three thousand to twenty-seven thousand weekly, were still far short of compensating for the devastation caused by tanker torpedoings. Controls, he declared, should be yet tighter and extend to still more commodities. Underlying much of his philosophy and his efforts was a desire, repeatedly avowed in public by Henderson, to level out society more equally. He alluded to the change in rich homes and habits, especially the anticipated extinction of the multi-servant household.

The well-scarred New Deal hand predicted to a Senate appropriations subcommittee that sixty-two billion dollars could be saved during the next months by applying brakes and inflexible regulations to prevent the runaway inflation of World War I, when business charged much what it pleased.

But Americans were attached to their cars. Residents of the West Coast and of the Southwest, who had oil rigs in their back yards, were soon among the most earnest of "Czar" Henderson's tormentors. With no apparent transportation problems and work-

ers needing jobs at the wells, these citizens questioned the need for gasoline rationing.

Mrs. Roosevelt was in sympathy. “To tell the people in the West,” she observed, “not to use their cars means that these people may never see another soul for weeks and weeks nor have a way of getting a sick person to a doctor.”

Motorists throughout the nation were just beginning to adjust to basic “A,” “B” and “C” coupons when it was discovered that hundreds of Congressmen had requested and received coveted no limit “X” cards, which had been intended for such business and professional people as doctors, policemen, firemen, telephone linesmen.

“With singular lack of a good sense of timing,” observed Donald Nelson’s press chief, a promising writer named Bruce Catton, “the Congress had chosen the month immediately after Pearl Harbor to pass a law providing pensions for retiring Congressmen. This had aroused a chorus of criticism, culminating in the derisive ‘Bundles for Congress’ campaign . . . the business of the ‘X’ cards reopened the old wound. . . .”

Henderson attempted to set an example—and perhaps even get Americans to laugh the whole matter off—by appearing in Washington’s streets on a “Victory Bicycle.” It was an ordinary bicycle with a large wire market basket mounted atop the front mudguard. However, this show of bravado was spiked when other “czars” shortly decided there was not enough civilian metal or rubber available for even “Victory Bicycles.” All new bicycles were “frozen.” In theory, so were the prices on used two-wheelers. Only those in the armed forces or in war industry were eligible to buy the black-painted items fresh off the assembly lines.

Gasoline rationing brought an end to the glassy clatter of the milkman’s truck every morning. Deliveries were reduced to every other day. Groceries and department stores asked customers to carry bundles and packages, even those which before December seventh would have been considered far too heavy or cumbersome to be trundled by other than gymnasts.

Some businesses attempting to be superconscientious nonetheless ran afoul of unimaginative bureaucratic minds. The Ander-

son Dairy of Las Vegas, Nevada, for example, rounded up several old milk wagons and horses to draw them. Proudly the firm advertised resumption of its seven-day-a-week home delivery of milk and dairy products. Neither gasoline nor rubber served as part of these iron-rimmed, hay-powered vehicles.

Within twenty-four hours, the wrath of the local shop of ODT (Office of Defense Transportation) was manifest. Arbitrarily, the dairy was ordered back to no more than an every-other-day delivery, whether by truck or horse cart.

Commenting on this example of bureaucracy an Anderson Dairy spokesman observed, "We thought that we were doing something to help the war effort by saving gasoline used by several hundred customers calling at our plant every day for dairy products." He indicated that someone at ODT seemed unable to tell the difference between a self-propelled truck and a horse-drawn wagon. His customers agreed.

The dairy's futile stab at a make-do conservation helped point up another shortage: rubber. Gone was the rubber reservoir of the East. The annual production of twelve thousand tons of synthetic rubber would have to soar to nearly five hundred thousand tons to meet war's gluttony, and later double this amount.

William Jeffers, sixty-nine, director of the American Rubber Company and former president of the Union Pacific Railroad, was convinced that he could give the nation rubber if he were just let alone.

"Too many expeditors!" roared the hot-tempered former president of the Union Pacific Railroad. ". . . Army and Navy men, commissioned officers. If we can keep the Army and Navy and these loafers out of these plants we will get this production . . . we will keep the country in rubber!"

The shortage of rubber and gasoline made sense, however, to at least one specialist, Herman Sonderling, registrar of the first institute of podiatry, at Long Island University.

"The automobile has degenerated our feet by nonusage," he asserted, claiming that nearly 30 per cent of 4-F classifications were caused by foot imperfections—mostly flat! With Americans

now compelled to walk more, Sonderling felt there would be an improvement in the nation's feet and a new zip to its stride.

Rationing radiated, and shortages spread. Radios for the civilian market sputtered out of production. Spare parts and tubes were all but unobtainable. Soon families had to rely on the good nature of neighbors with functioning sets. There was not, however, any shortage or lack of volume in soap operas. They pulsed their lugubrious, dreary tales of misery and disillusion with ever-increasing tempo. By the flick of a tuning knob, the housewife could be totally enveloped in a man-wrought shroud of gloom for nearly three hours in the morning and, after a respite for lunch and a drying of tears, for the same period in the afternoon. Many could hardly wait for their evening resumption of airborne masochism.

The names of these programs were so familiar that they became real and palpable within the sobbing intimacy of a kitchen or the curtained, desolate corner of a living room: “Stella Dallas,” “David Harum,” “Portia Faces Life,” “Lorenzo Jones,” “Pepper Young's Family,” “Mary Marlin,” “Ma Perkins,” “Big Sister,” “Second Husband,” “Bachelor's Children,” “Joyce Jordan,” “When a Girl Marries,” “Backstage Wife,” and so on into monotony.

Phonographs disappeared from store windows; typewriters were “frozen” as solid as last year's herring catch. They could be purchased only on a priority which, for the average civilian, was as easy to obtain as a P-40 fighting plane.

An undeniable shortage of a commodity generally taken for granted—paper and paper products—stemmed in part from the robbing of the lumber camps' manpower. The best loggers and millhands possessed the kind of health and muscles that made them desirable to any induction board. They could not be replaced by the average 4-F or altogether satisfactorily by POW's, although the Geneva Convention sanctioned this type of labor for prisoners if their efforts were modestly reimbursed. As a result there was a shortage of all sorts of cardboard and paper throughout the war. Stores urged customers to “bring your own

paper bag"—a humble item which nonetheless accounted for some two and a half million tons of paper a year in peacetime.

"From Selective Service registration through to discharge," the War Production Board wrote in an unpublished, rather wistful eulogy of paper, "Armed Services personnel moved on printed orders. Its equipment was made and transported by means of printed forms and records. Much of its training was through the medium of manuals of instruction. Its exploits were recorded in newspapers, magazines, and books.

"Consumer rationing and price control, as well as campaigns for war bonds, blood donation, waste paper, scrap iron and steel, pulpwood, waste fats, victory gardens, labor recruitment and WAC, WAVE and nurse enlistments owed much of their success to the printed word.

"Although newspapers, magazines and books performed the essential function of explaining, persuading, inspiring and unifying the people, other kinds of printing were also highly important. It would have been impossible to carry on war production or any industry in the absence of functional forms. . . ."

The report in effect gave a nice nonobjective pat on the back to that essential of big, busy government: paperwork. Its servants never wanted for paper, even though the "help win the war" virtues of narrow margins, single spacing, and typing on reverse sides were extolled and sometimes ordered until many letters, directives, or especially, press releases became nearly illegible except to trained cryptanalysts.

Newspapers and national magazines generally received close to normal allocations of cheaper-grade paper on the theory that they served a morale function. Hardly in such an inspirational category, however, were the 5,500 pints of red ink or the 3,000 spools of red tape (totaling 216,000 yards) which bureaucrats purchased in the single year, 1943.

Another fiber product, burlap, almost went off the market. This material had been imported from India, cut off from easy sea communication in the first years of the war. The American equivalent was costly, in small production. Farmers found themselves reusing burlap grain sacks until even patching—something

farmwomen had never done before—failed to keep the precious contents from trickling through.

Rationing seemed to snag some of the most unlikely products. Millions of American fathers and mothers thought, for example, the scarcity of diapers and diaper laundries was, at the very least, capricious. This author himself, between voyages, all but fell to his knees pleading for service for a newborn. It wasn't that any of the civilian-goods arbiters in Washington or even overzealous local boards were really against babies. There were just too many "critical" items used in the production of diapers, from manufacture to delivery. Cotton was on priority as an armed-forces clothing essential, so was spring steel for the pins, and all of the ingredients involved in transportation, from rubber tires to gasoline, not forgetting the soap and heat required for the wash water. But, even though the laundry tub and mother's (or grandmother's) scrubbing board plus diapers of less than downy texture were compelled to limp along for the duration, old-fashioned methods and materials did not discourage a bumper crop of more than ten million babies born during the four years of war.

In the nursery, the little stuffed dog and the wind-up train had to rattle along until peacetime as best they could. With one devastating slash of his red pencil, Henderson swept toys off the shelf—all but a trifling 7 per cent of normal production. No one ever fathomed just how he had arrived at *that* particular percentage.

However, the younger generation had plenty of diversions even without toys. School children picked cellars, attics, public parks, and back alleys clean of old paper, rags, and assorted junk. In a five-month period, for example, Chicago youngsters collected thirty-six million pounds of old paper—some sixty-five pounds for each boy and girl.

In the first year of the war, a million and a half 4-H boys and girls harvested 3,000,000 bushels of vegetables from victory gardens and preserved 14,000,000 jars of food. On larger farms and ranges, 4-H children in 1942 raised 6,500,000 chickens, 300,000 hogs, and 65,000 dairy cattle. Just to be absolutely sure that none would accuse them of loafing, these industrious youngsters

collected 23,000,000 pounds of salvage rubber, 73,000 tons of scrap metal, and hawked \$6,000,000 in war bonds.

For the urban habitué, hip boots were as minor a consideration as bear-skin parkas. When its gluttonous rubber content made this form of heavy footgear virtually extinct, however, fishermen were not the only ones who suffered. E. P. Smith, a ration-board member in Bourbon, Indiana, received this appeal for hipboot priority: "I pasture my cows, they go 'cross the river. The nearest bridge is a mile. It's too damned cold to wade." The dairy farmer obtained his priority—and, probably, his boots as well.

As one assault upon the wool shortage, tailors eliminated vests from men's suits—making them overnight as passé as the neck ruffle or the handkerchief-in-sleeve. Swinging into the spirit, some haberdashers offered "victory pants," without cuffs. No one, however, had really estimated just *how* much cloth was actually used.

Distilleries, switching almost 100 per cent to the manufacture of chemicals for explosives, explained that their stocks should assure almost enough liquor for four years. Beer, while it may have tasted watery, was "stabilized," commencing at twenty cents a bottle, depending on the grade.

Even so, it wasn't like old times. The hard drinker, who had to develop a taste for wine, since he could no longer buy whiskey alone, and the chain smoker, who had to line up for his pack or two of cigarettes, could both agree with Sherman that indeed war was hell.

A little-heard-of item—glass eyes—never found its way to the shady shelves of the clandestine market but remained acutely scarce. Faced with an annual prewar need of 62,500 eyes, American industry could meet only one third of the demand. The remaining two thirds had been imported from Germany.

Plastics and glass, however, came to stay in home and hospital. Brass, for example, used in inhalers and atomizers clattered off to the war and never marched home again. Nickel and chrome plating left dentures forever, unable to compete with the lighter-weight plastics.

Batteries became rarer than McKinley campaign buttons, because of the scarcity of lead, copper, zinc, and other ingredients. An effectively loaded flashlight was so precious an item that the OCD urged citizens at night to “carry something white.” White garments from head to foot, the OCD added, would be even more desirable—if perhaps somewhat wraithlike.

Hearing aids were inoperable without tiny batteries. More than three million Americans had to employ every known wile to keep existing amplifiers powered. Those, young and old, who were not sufficiently foresighted to have purchased such a device before Pearl Harbor had to keep leaning closer, with an “Eh, what?” for the duration.

Senior citizens among their number, nevertheless, enjoyed favoritism from most war rationing boards. That in Manhattan for example, which handled as many as fifteen thousand requests a day, increased allowances for canned fruit juices and other prepared or concentrated foods whenever the applicant could show he or she was too weak to squeeze oranges or chop meat.

On the other hand, no sympathy was wasted on the middle-aged spinster who sought a food coupon for her eleven-year-old cat. “Share yours,” she was curtly informed.

This board, typical of those operating in large cities, held day-long sessions in the severely appointed offices of the General Motors Building. A teacher, a doctor, and a lawyer presided over this combination of confessional, clinic, and civil court. Decisions often had to be Solomonesque. Authorize a gallon of gasoline a month, for example, to a boy with a model plane? Why, certainly. Interest in aviation was to be encouraged.

Those rejected in their demands sometimes turned on the board with the fury of cornered tigers. “Why,” shrieked one rebuffed woman, “you’re not one of those dollar-a-year men! You’re not worth a fifty-cent-a-year man!”

The OPA had nearly sixty thousand paid employees, aided by three hundred thousand volunteers. With all this watch-dog force, however, the black market and the cheating were never fully stamped out. Human nature’s penchant for breaking laws may have been to blame. A choice cut of sirloin from under the

counter, a "bootleg" pair of nylon stockings, or a full tank of gasoline for a three-gallon stamp—all sprouted from the same selfish motives to flaunt governmental edicts.

Racketeers looked upon ration coupons as they formerly had bootleg liquor. Two tough professional criminals—one of them a murderer—were captured on the Pennsylvania-Maryland border in February 1944 after a blazing gun battle with state troopers. In the car of Charles Falker and Merle Mercer were almost sufficient coupons, stolen from Altoona rationing boards, to establish their own rival allocation system. Mercer was returned to the Reno, Nevada, jail from which he had sawed his way to freedom; Falker's parole from the Folsom State Prison, California, after a long sentence for murder, was canceled. Neither would have any more use for ration stamps.

Others pursued this illegal traffic less violently. In Miami an enterprising man identified by police as Eugene Brading, aged twenty-seven, was arrested and accused of masterminding a black-market ring of gasoline coupons totaling more than two million gallons.

A similar illicit trade in electric motor bearings and bushings thrived so robustly that it became virtually an industry within an industry. The military could count more than three hundred different uses for electric motors, from turning radar screens and boosting the controls of large bombers to driving submarines and moving gun mounts and other parts of their complicated mechanisms. Without their scarce bearings and bushings, the motors became utterly worthless. They would not even command much of a price on the scrap market.

As the first year of the war ended, resentment against the OPA neared a crescendo. Neither civilian nor military officialdom were in any way satisfied that rationing and controls were either equitable or efficiently administered.

Congress took notice and formed its own forum for examining complaints: the Senate Committee on Reduction of Non-Essential Federal Expenditures. Confounded by the latest, longest, and most complex of all OPA's blizzard of forms, representatives of industry descended en masse to testify.

“Until this big questionnaire came along,” declared Ernest Brier of Parke Davis and Company, Detroit, “we were just about keeping our heads above the water in cooperating in every way, but we can go no further.”

“We think this subject has gone far beyond anything that is essential,” seconded Eric Johnston, president of the United States Chamber of Commerce.

Others, less constrained, attacked the agency’s “gestapo methods” and its “senseless rules, regulations and policies.” Small shop owners claimed that the burden of form-filling coupled with restrictions on a “fair” markup was putting them out of business.

Worthington Pump and Machinery Company spokesmen noted they were submitting 545 federal reports annually, which worked out to one report for every four employees in the firm. Eastman Kodak Company, charging that 75 per cent of war-agency reports were “either unnecessary or of doubtful value,” claimed that the time spent on them was sufficient “to build a Flying Fortress.”

Henderson resigned. Exhausted and suffering from eye trouble, he went West for a vacation. As a swan song, he had ordered all “pleasure driving” banned in the East. Local police were asked to enforce an edict which proved to be wholly unenforceable. Who could disprove that a lady was en route to market, to the doctor’s, to sit with an elderly relative, or that a gentleman was bound on a matter of urgent business?

Schools throughout the country, however, were happy to cooperate. Most of them cut off bus service to children who lived within two miles of their classes. Parents generally hailed the healthful aspects of the emergency edict.

The rich, the middle-income group, and the poor all felt rationing, as Leon Henderson had expected. The affluent Breckinridge Long, for example, wrote in his diary: “At Montpelier [his Maryland horse-breeding farm] we have no fuel oil for the house—only just enough to keep the service wing partly heated. All driving for pleasure is eliminated. So with a cold house and no use of the car we are comfortable in the hotel apartment, and walking to and from places necessary to reach. The farmer has

oil enough to keep his house at 50 degrees, but is helped by the kitchen stove. And, so, the whole east is rationed.”

There were shortages and concerns over shortages that winter more serious than a cold country estate or the drying up of the old school bus. It was an unusually severe January and February, especially cruel in New England. Bangor, Maine, shivered under a city-wide lack of rubber boots for children or adults. To make matters worse, the Northeast states could not obtain even enough application blanks to apply for more coupons—for any item.

The poultry supply (after the appetite of the armed forces was filled) in this big chicken- and turkey-producing area dwindled. There were few eggs and fewer chickens for the Sunday pot. Indeed, the facts supported the quip that New Englanders were forgetting what white or dark meat looked like—to say nothing of the sound of a clucking hen.

Yet more distressing was the discovery that Boston’s kerosene storage tanks were nearly dry. So critical was the prospect that evacuation was prepared for thousands of thoroughly chilled families in tenement districts, including those in East Boston, Somerville, Chelsea, and Quincy.

J. W. Farley, executive director of the Massachusetts Committee of Public Safety, warned “the margin is so slight that it will probably break any minute,” but attempted to reassure, “we’re not trying to be alarming.”

It required an almost tearful appeal from the City Council direct to President Roosevelt himself before a tanker was finally started northward.

“On the [February] day appointed for the arrival of the tanker,” the OPA was to write in an unpublished report, “regional rationing officials waited in the tower of the Customs House, scanning the outer harbor for the first sign of the by now urgently needed ship. Night fell with no sign or word from the tanker. For security reasons, it was impossible to attempt to establish radio communication with the ship. The only chance was to wait and hope she had not been sunk by one of the enemy submarines then lurking off the coast.

“State and public safety directors began to put into operation previously drawn disaster relief plans. Armories were alerted to receive the hundreds of families who would soon have no heat for their apartments. City trucks and every other available means of transportation were prepared to assist all people requesting aid in getting to the public buildings in which they would be housed until fuel oil was available. These preparations included soup kitchens, food, health protection measures, all the machinery of disaster relief.

“On the following day the tanker arrived. . . .”

The Hub City had been frightened.

Rationing at its best, was never wholly satisfactory. Administering it or finding those who would do so was an almost unrelieved nightmare. Mrs. Kathleen Plympton, a volunteer supervisor of Portland, Oregon, Board Number One did not exaggerate unduly when she told of her own problems. She worked out a dialogue which she repeated at ladies' meetings throughout the Northwest:

“Hello, Operator, please get me Atwater 4141 yes, I've tried for fifteen minutes to dial the number. Thank you

“Oh, hello, Mrs. Smith, this is the volunteer supervisor of Rationing Board Number One. We are desperately in need of volunteers; there are vacancies in almost all of our departments. We were told by Civilian Defense that you had registered to help. We would be so happy if you could give us some time.

“What? You *really* will? Two days a week how wonderful of you! Could you come on Monday?

“Oh, that's wash day. Well, how about Tuesday?

“You iron Tuesday? Then, perhaps Wednesday? You say that is your club day. Yes, of course I quite understand, Mrs. Smith.

“Could you work it, Thursday? . . . No, you always spend Thursday with your mother well, what about Friday or Saturday? Yes, I know that is the end of the week—family, home, and so forth.

“ . . . which day *was* it, Mrs. Smith, you felt you would like to volunteer? Maybe Thursday, did you say? Yes, I am sure

mother would be willing to give up the day with you to aid in the volunteer war effort . . . oh, but not *this* week, you say? You have a hair appointment.

“Shall I put you down for the week after? No, you just remembered the dressmaker was coming . . . too bad. What was that? You are taking a trip? The first of next month . . . you will be gone six weeks? Oh, I see, Mrs. Smith. Yes, of course I quite understand. Yes, I know you are anxious to help. Thank you so much for the thought. Yes, I’ll call you again, sometime later on. . . .”

Thirty calls a day, averaging ten minutes to a call, adding up to five hours on the telephone. Mrs. Plympton mused in despair that from all this effort no more than twelve volunteers would agree to help. And of this corporal’s guard, about five would finally show up.

“How,” she pondered, “to distribute five workers, no matter *how* sincere and conscientious through nine departments: passenger gas, truck and nonhighway gas, tires, fuel oil and stoves, shoes, boots, and bicycles, consumer foods and medical diets, institutional foods, furlough and special rations, and last, but not least, price control, a whole institution in itself?

“For each of these departments it meant a counter to be waited on, applications to be read and considered; rations to be issued, coupons to be issued, coupons to be counted and voided; files to be indexed and alphabetized, mail to be tended to and surveys to be made.

“Meanwhile the public was standing in line, long lines; the impatient ones, the patient, the belligerent and the timid, the rich and the needy, the honest and the chiselers. Some hoping to gain, others asking only a legitimate share. All were a little bewildered—rationing was so new to free America. No one as yet quite sure whether to curse or bless this strange innovation. So much depended on the service these long lines in waiting would find meted to them behind the counter . . . day after day the gray hairs increased in her coiffure as volunteers threw down their work and went home because some salaried clerk went out for a soft drink during hours.”

Volunteer workers lived a lifetime in a few months, according to Mrs. Plympton.

“A customer,” she added, “gazed over the counter once at a group of little Girl Scouts busily stamping envelopes.

“ ‘My goodness, do you take them as young as *that*?’

“ ‘Oh yes,’ replied the volunteer supervisor, running her fingers through her thin white hair. ‘We all started like that a *few* months ago. OPA develops one *so* quickly.’ ”

CHAPTER 6

The Civilian Army

THE UNITED STATES, not a wholly unwarlike nation, has nonetheless never taken to a large standing army. Historically it has depended on its civilians in times of stress to change virtually overnight to fighting men.

Such a transformation, considering the specialized skills of modern warfare, has assumed more and more the aura of black magic. Perhaps, indeed, some form of magic does play a role, for surely few great nations have so consistently plunged into wars with such abominable preparation.

World War II snatched from their homes the eligible males out of the fifty million Americans, aged eighteen to sixty-four, who registered for Selective Service. Indeed, the nation had never before mustered so huge a conscript army in such an orderly fashion. Where, for example, there had been 250,000 desertions from the World War I draft (men who signed up, then vanished seemingly forever into thin air), there were but 5,000 in World War II.

Selective Service in peacetime was born during the summer of 1940, following severe labor pains. The Administration and War Department which sponsored the legislation were showered with abuse from those in opposition. The public was subjected to an especially virulent spate of Communist propaganda, including anticapitalist harangues and leaflets reproducing the more grue-

some photographs to have emerged from World War I's charnel house.

"Welcome home!" was the bitter caption under a picture of a basket case (a multiple amputee) being removed from a hospital ship.

"Suppose," commenced one sly leaflet, "Bethlehem Steel's armor-piercing projectiles should meet on the same test range against the company's projectile-proof armor plate?"

"We *refuse* to go, over, over there!" asserted another throw-away. Rallies and demonstrations echoed raucously through the marbled corridors of Capitol Hill.

Not even the Navy, the Marines or the Air Corps (still a part of the Army) wanted a draft. These services could obtain their men "from enlistments," barked proud old officers, from reasoning gleaned out of the last war. But they would soon learn about global war.

Selective Service became the law after a hot debate ended in a 223-114 vote in the House, 47-25 in the Senate, in September 1940. Then commenced the formidable task of preparing to register millions of Americans between the ages of twenty-one and thirty-five. Nearly a million volunteer workers had to equip 125,000 registration places and sound the reveille for action. Their toil lacked even the stimulus of a war in progress.

The draft's big, amiable director, Lieutenant General Lewis B. Hershey, thought the blueprint "ideal," especially from the standpoint of objectivity. The operation and policy were controlled by Washington while each registrant was impartially considered "by other citizens who lived in the same community." Hershey considered the first few months the "crucial" period when the whole structure could have crumbled were it not for the patience and the dedication of the local boards.

Abuses had to be recognized, then speedily corrected before they mushroomed out of control. For example, there was sometimes a temptation to use the draft as a means of solving community or local problems: getting rid of the town drunk or putting into uniform a husband who was in arrears on alimony.

Somehow 16,500,000 Americans were registered on the first

call. Ultimately the wheels were spinning in such high gear that the actual induction of 500,000 men was accomplished in the same month.

The boards were as varied in their composition and in the peculiar problems they had to solve as their rationing and price-control counterparts. The system encompassed the entire spectrum of American life, from fashionable neighborhoods in big cities whose "customers" arrived in chauffeured limousines to slum areas and their often disreputable flotsam.

There was yet another distinctive type among the 6,400 local boards throughout the nation: the mountaineer. One that evoked pungent memories of World War I was Board No. 1, Fentress County, Tennessee, presided over by a tall, heavy Medal of Honor holder, Sergeant Alvin York. The gangling youth of 1917 had objected to induction because of religious convictions—"War's agin the Book!" Not too surprisingly, he was sympathetic toward those of similar beliefs. When a draftee filed an appeal, the fifty-four-year-old York and his mountaineer board members journeyed to the man's home, or shack, met on the front porch, and listened to the case.

In 1942 York's feat of killing single-handed 25 of the enemy and capturing 132 others tardily won further recognition. The Army commissioned the Tennessean a major and ordered him to semiactive duty.

The legendary straight-shooters and hard fighters from the hill country nevertheless were prone to such disqualifications as bad teeth and flat feet. Illiteracy, as in the preceding conflict, was tolerated. If the draftee did not learn to scribble simple words in training camp and read a few children's stories—in big, bold letters—the problem was passed on to his regiment or, if he was shunted to an always-protesting Navy, the captain of his ship.

G. I. Joe, although somewhat taller than his doughboy father, was culled from a group that was no healthier than the average of 1917. Approximately five million young Americans, 30 per cent of the registrants, were rejected for physical defects—the same approximate rate, as a matter of fact, that prevailed in the

Civil War. Indeed had there been compulsory service or records kept in 1776, the American Revolution might have shown a similar percentage of unfit.

The primary reasons for being given a sometimes-coveted 4-F classification were muscular and/or bone malformations, heart or circulatory ailments, mental deficiency or disease, hernia, and syphilis. The lowlands, the seaboard, and the deep south all vied for the dubious distinction of leading in rejections, often with rates as high as 50 per cent.

The bad health of so many young men was appalling to General Hershey, who wrote, "I cannot help but feel that our educational system—from kindergarten on through the colleges and universities—has neglected one of its most important responsibilities, that of presenting a balance between the so-called physical, the mental and the emotional. That balance must be restored." He criticized "public indifference and apathy" for its part in "the present low standards of physical conditioning."

On the more positive side, Hershey cited as a vast low rejection area "that triangle of States bounded on one side by Washington, Oregon, Utah, Colorado and Oklahoma; on another side by Oklahoma, Kansas, Iowa, Minnesota and Wisconsin; and on the north by Canada . . . this area got to be referred to as the 'health triangle.'"

Not only health but personal conviction, or professed conviction, kept young Americans out of the draft—eight thousand all told, a number disproportionately small compared to the attention and often clamor they caused. The public, Hershey observed, considered the conscientious objector as "an abuse of a compulsory system." But the director of Selective Service surprised many by defending the conscientious objector. His beliefs were "founded on long traditions in America—that a person because of his religious training and belief could choose to reject the obligation that he should bear arms in defense of his country."

The 152 religions specified ranged from the major faiths to such less well-known sects as the "Home of God" and the basic "I Am." The Mennonites, represented by 3,562 of draft age,

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were the largest single group to register as objectors. The Jehovah's Witnesses, nearly 4,000 strong, would not report to their local boards at all. They went to jail for their adamancy.

Attorney General Biddle disapproved of this harsh treatment as much as he did to that meted out to the nisei. In his view it was, "a clumsy and stupid way of handling persons whose obstinate and belligerent attitudes almost always could be traced to early parental cruelty."

The Jehovah's Witnesses claimed, without corroboration from the law, that each individual member was a minister. Although they were model prisoners, their restraint occasionally cracked under incessant jibes from hardened fellow convicts. One young man, as recalled by Biddle, finally snarled back, "You just wait till He comes again. He'll clean up all of you dirty bastards."

Some of Father Divine's large number of followers also gave their draft boards trouble. Alvin Payne, for example, a Los Angeles janitor, aged fifty-six, claimed that after joining the sect, he was "reborn," as "Jacob Israel," aged eight.

"I couldn't register as Alvin Payne," explained the soft-spoken janitor, "because in doing so I would have had to reclaim my now dead mortal self." Uncertain, perhaps, whether to turn the case over to the juvenile court, the federal authorities finally allowed Payne to return to his place of employment after registering. They observed "he certainly did a lot of work for an eight-year-old!"

Lew Ayres became the most celebrated conscientious objector. Aged thirty-four, the slender Hollywood star, who had immortalized the disillusioned German soldier in *All Quiet on the Western Front*, shouldered an ax instead of a rifle, working in an Oregon lumber camp.

Discussing his idealistic principles against killing, the handsome and sensitive actor said he was "quite sure" that his role of young Paul Baumer in Erich Maria Remarque's novel had left its emotional mark. He conceded that he was risking a promising career.

National sentiment, or bias, against the "cowardly" conscientious objectors was so strong that many theaters withdrew films

in which Ayres played a role. One about to be issued, *Born to Be Bad*, was shot over again with another star.

The actor, however, asked for reclassification to noncombatant duty with the Army. The request granted, Private Ayres was ordered to Camp Barkley Medical Replacement Center, in Texas, where he proved so efficient that his commanding officer observed, "I wish I had a whole battalion of men just like him."

From Barkley, Lew Ayres shifted to duties with the Chaplains' Corps. Ultimately he distinguished himself under fire in his care of the wounded and dying during the Japanese bombings of Leyte.

A conscientious objector who registered and could prove his sincerity was no flaunter of Selective Service. But there were ten thousand court convictions for violating the law, ranging from failure to register or to carry a draft card, to falsifying information or not reporting for induction. Penalties were as low as a hundred dollar fine, as high as five-year prison terms.

With a complete lack of patriotism and social consciousness, wayward young and not-so-young men resorted to a grab-bag assortment of ruses, occasionally ingenious, to evade draft registration.

The law ultimately caught up with a Massachusetts engineering student who barricaded himself in a remote cabin and threatened to shoot it out with anyone who attempted to bring him to register. He said he was not a conscientious objector; he merely wanted nothing to do with this "dishonorable and imperialistic war."

In New York City, another man went to jail for teaching would-be draft dodgers how to fake deafness, mental disorders or heart ailments. And, shades of the Civil War, a twenty-four-year-old Ohio man paid his fourteen-year-old brother six dollars to register for him.

A Wisconsin youth of nineteen, claiming to be an hereditary "chieftain" of the lost and almost forgotten Potawatomi tribe was ordered into court for failure to register. Unimpressed, the judge ruled the defendant was truly "a brave" and must get his "war paint and feathers" within ten days at the "draft board's tepee."

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A Los Angeles resident, Edward M. Sheridan, age twenty-eight, was indicted by a Federal grand jury for listing his horse, "Mary Ann Sheridan," as a dependent. "Whether Mary Ann is a daughter or a horse is beside the point," he protested, with scant success. "The way she eats oats she certainly is a dependent."

Another Selective Service Board in this area had a case that did Sheridan one better. A mule had been registered for duty, not as a dependent. And still a third turned up a two-year-old boy, duly signed up.

Easier to understand was the case of two brothers, Antonio and Donato Malango, who made their home at Maier's Corner, Staten Island, where they shared a farm and a goat. The war was two years old when the brothers chanced to learn of its existence. Seeking glass to repair a broken window in their hut, they first learned of rationing and next of what was responsible for that rationing. Unable to read English, they existed in a perpetual news blackout. Both in their forties and ineligible for active service, they willingly registered—and returned to their farm and goat.

Everett Stewart, who lived in the small Kentucky community Valley Station, demonstrated a prowess as an impersonator that rivaled the professional. He changed his voice and his clothes, and finally, dressed as a woman with a wig and floppy hat, made a sorrowful call at the draft board to announce that "my husband" is dead. Previously as Stewart's mythical "half brother," later as his sister, his father, and his crippled uncle, he had kept the Selective Service unit informed of the progressive "deterioration" of Everett Stewart's health.

When no hospital record or grave site, to say nothing of corpse, could be produced, Department of Justice agents seized the next best alternative—and delivered the draft dodger himself to court. He was sent to the Atlanta Penitentiary for three years.

In Izard County, Arkansas, an entire mountaineer family waged a pitched battle to keep one of their young men from registering. The males of the household banged away with shotguns while the females wielded double-bladed axes, meat cleavers, and heavy clubs to beat off a sheriff's posse. It took a squad of G-men, all of them veteran gangbusters, to bag the exaggeratedly

reluctant draftee. The remaining members of the family were then carried off to prison, burdened with sentences ranging from six months to three years. Sharing their penal servitude, the rustic kinfolk presented nonetheless a remarkable example of togetherness.

Induction boards also had internal feuds, although such instances were the exception rather than the rule. An entire board of five volunteers in one New England village, disagreeing both personally and professionally with each other, locked the door of the registration office atop the old firehouse and resigned en masse. The chairman, who now was without a board to preside over, telegraphed the state director of Selective Service to help him "find another five men just like except different from those who resigned."

The board of Washington Court House (Ohio) protested against labor's strikes by going on strike themselves. As a result, several patriotic young men made news by entering an Army recruiting station for the formalities temporarily suspended by the local Selective Service.

And Joseph C. Salak, chief clerk of Board No. 25 in Chicago, claimed the uncommon distinction of drafting himself. A telegraph operator, he was subsequently serving with the 361st Engineers in Rheims when the inevitable finally happened. Another G.I., tired, unshaven, looking just as though he had stepped out of a Mauldin cartoon, slouched past Salak, suddenly stopped, wheeled, and exclaimed, more in surprise than anger: "Hey, you're the s.o.b. who drafted me!"

The young men, taken from their homes, were the object of almost staggering assaults by groups who sought to take up where the maternal wing had perforce to draw back. Ministers toured the training camps; societies, churches, and well-intentioned individuals deluged the draftees with literally millions of pocket-sized Bibles.

The donor often wrote his or her own message of bon voyage and intended cheer on the fly leaf. More often than not, the quotation, or the thought was peculiarly inappropriate to the occasion and the recipient's state of mind.

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For example, a passage from John 14 greeted the writer of this book, scribbled on the flyleaf of a Bible presented to him before convoy time: "In my father's house are many mansions. . . . I go to prepare a place for you."

The draftees also proved handy targets for Anti-Saloon League tracts and related literature. Slogans flew at them with the profusion and insistence of bullets: "Use your Bible to Battle the Bottle!" "Two resolutions for 1944: I will keep sweet, and I will not drink alcohol."

The bone-dry organizations were attempting to duplicate their predecessors' success in 1917, when similar efforts culminated in national prohibition. Gene Tunney, a lieutenant commander in the Naval Reserve (and also a director of the American Distillers Corporation), tirelessly preached the virtues of sobriety, as well as of continence.

While the former heavyweight champion must have possessed some understanding of young men, if only from his own World War I experience with the Marines, the religious and uplift groups surely did not seem to.

Swept up in this welling landslide of "do-good" and "think-good," the Army went to what the horrified old top sarges branded a disaster-courting extreme. One of George Washington's own orders to the Continental Army was dragged out, dusted off, and reproduced, beneath a likeness of the general astride his white horse, on thousands of barracks walls: "The men of the Army will refrain from using profane words, and from telling dirty stories. . . ."

The Navy, not wholly broken away from the salty tradition of John Paul Jones, Stephen Decatur, and David Farragut, was unwilling to risk a mass defection by the boatswain, its strong right arm. No effort was made to compete with the Army's flood tide of reform. Its officers, if indeed they were personally of another mind, turned a deaf ear to swearing.

As to concern for sailors' morals and physical weal, contraceptives and instructions, printed in large type and monosyllabic words, were issued at the gangplank when the bluejackets went ashore.

Fun, often on the lusty side, and a heavy coating of humor whenever and wherever possible helped to make life bearable for the vast citizen army. Quips, always obvious and often crude, combining with an objective grousing, like a low-key monologue, maintained the G.I.s' spirits.

For those left at home, the lighter side of service life was invariably emphasized. Authors such as Marion Hargrove, a North Carolina newspaperman, raked glittering hay out of being drafted. His *See Here, Private Hargrove* became a best seller and was bought by Hollywood.

The products of Selective Service proved very funny fellows in *This Is the Army*, an Irving Berlin musical, which featured an authentic soldier cast. There were lesser books, plays, articles, and a torrent of radio fare purporting to portray or caricature the barracks, drill ground, and mess lines.

It was the civilian, still identifiable beneath the thin, unfamiliar raiment of military uniform, who would win or lose the twentieth century's wars. His was a serious, life-or-death assignment. And much of his story, contrary to Broadway, did not make especially funny reading—or witnessing.

The growing casualty lists in the daily press, the word in more and more American towns and cities that someone just "down the street" had been hurt or killed or—in some respects worse yet—reported "missing," the homesick letters postmarked from an improbable Baedeker of the world's locations, all bore their own witness to the deadly serious business of war. On the home front, as on the battlefield, there was no mistaking the message.

CHAPTER 7

The Capital City

TO THE AVERAGE CITIZEN the national capital was a mysterious Olympus, the sources of ration books and of the draftee's "Greetings!" from the Selective Service. If he thought of this city on the Potomac at all, it was much as he might reflect fleetingly on Baghdad, Singapore, or Shangri-La. Wasn't it a remote, unfamiliar never-never land where men pushed buttons, spoke into microphones, and signed papers which sent other men, ships, tanks, and planes tumbling off in multiple directions?

In all likelihood, the citizen tended to glorify the well of confusion, misdirection, and cross-purposes which actually was the kingpin city of the United States and its war effort—the not entirely sane or sentient brain cell of an octopus, as it were.

Washington, which had mushroomed in size and prestige as a national city during the Civil War, made a brave try for international honors after America's entry into World War I. However, Paris, London, and even in defeat, Berlin along with Vienna clung firmly to their laurels. But from the outset of World War II it was apparent that yesterday's fashions in international cities were undergoing drastic change. After the fall of France, the free world looked to Washington-London for salvation. As the war progressed, the first half of that equation assumed dominance.

Swollen with the ever-increasing numbers of those in Government, the city on the Potomac was also home to businessmen, middle-men sprouting like weeds and a burgeoning "international

set" that included both accredited diplomats and a potpourri of hangers-on hitherto native to Paris, Rome, Madrid, Lisbon, and Ankara.

Dominating all other considerations was the scarcity of housing—for either overnight or the more permanent variety. Every morning and evening the classified columns of the city's newspapers printed plaintive ads such as the following:

WANTED—rental 3-bedroom house, for Army captain and family of two teen-age children. No pets. Sober. No parties. Tel. . . .

SINGLE GIRL—defense agency worker recently arrived desperately needs to share room with another girl.

BONUS—will pay handsomely for information leading to the finding of an Apartment for

Hotels were unprepared for this emergency, just as they had been unprepared for the influx of people that occurred during World War I. Cots were set up in salesmen's sample salons, in parlors, and even in dining rooms after supper hours. Reservations made months in advance meant nothing if "brass," swaggered in at the last minute, insisting on priority. Once a visitor had succeeded in gaining occupancy, he could keep his hotel room for only five days.

This rule of brief tenure, determinedly enforced, resulted in a "march of hotel patrons." Any day of the week, a passerby was treated to the spectacle of bellboys carrying guests' luggage between the city's hostelries. This practice at least kept the lodging situation fluid, in contrast to World War I when businessmen had often been obliged to open their suitcases in poolrooms and in cul-de-sacs off the lobbies of Washington's hostelries, remaining in such a state of improvisation for weeks, months, and in some cases, the duration.

Broadway, presented with a made-to-order motif, staged *The Doughgirls*. It dealt with the hotel crisis and its conjectured effect upon businessmen and their mistresses in Washington. A movie, similarly inspired, plucked its plot from the housing shortage.

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Certainly these were boom, beneficent times for lazy script writers.

Real estate soared. An owner could almost literally name his price for a house or a cooperative apartment. Stabilization of rents meant little since landlords often demanded extra "gifts."

Frequently recalled was the legend about the middle-aged man drowning in the Potomac River who shouted, "Help! Help!" A passerby, taking off his coat and trousers, leapt in and swam out to the unfortunate individual. Grabbing his flailing arms and holding his head out of water, his rescuer asked, "What's your name?"

"John Smith," he sputtered.

"What's your address?"

The man told him. With that, the avowed rescuer let go and swam back to shore as fast as he could stroke. Replacing his coat and pants, he hailed a cab and drove to the address given him by the man in the Potomac.

Knocking on the door, breathless, he advised the woman who opened it that John Smith, her tenant apparently, had just drowned, and—Was his room available?

The woman shook her head. "No."

Incredulous, her caller demanded, "*Who* could possibly have rented it?"

"The man who pushed him in," came the matter-of-fact reply.

Current, too, was the story of the man who existed largely through the vengeful hope that on the day after victory he would call on Washington's larger hotels, inquiring at each about accommodations. He assumed that the clerk would rub his hands together, like old times, and favor the potential guest with a professional smile, then say ingratiatingly:

"Yes, sir! Now we have a nice one with bath and twin beds on the fifth floor, but if you wish a larger room . . ."

At that the other man would draw himself up and snarl, "I don't want your lousy room!"

Washington, however, would never be the same again. V-E Day and V-J Day came and went, and still there was a shortage of rooms. In 1965, with new hotels and motels dotting Washing-

ton and its environs, accommodations are still at a premium. The struggling town which Major Pierre L'Enfant had long ago blue-printed by the Potomac had become a world metropolis. It would remain that way.

The national capital was scarcely able to provide even the armed forces or those who commanded them with adequate space. The huge, labyrinthine Pentagon, across the Potomac, in Virginia, was not ready for occupancy at the time of Pearl Harbor. When it was, its denizens consumed months learning to traverse the paths to their offices.

In the meantime, wings and annexes sprouted from the "temporary" buildings of World War I until the mall and other areas between the Lincoln Memorial and the Capitol, originally landscaped as bucolic grassy spaces, looked like a defense housing project. Even a few architectural relics, which had served as hospitals or warehouses during the Civil War, suddenly echoed to electric typewriters and the chatter of the more than eighty-five thousand who pounded them—"the 1440 girls," they were called, because that was their average pay under Civil Service.

The armed forces sprinted so far out ahead of Washington's civilian agencies in the race for space and "bodies" that one agency director grumbled: "If the Army and Navy could capture territory as well as they grab office space we might win the war!"

Hospital rooms were also at a premium. An expectant mother could book a room months in advance only to find at the crucial hour that her bed had been seized by the wife of a brass hat or perhaps by the great personage himself. At least one woman (Mrs. Hazel Davidson, wife of a public-relations man) boarded an early morning train for New York to have her baby born there that evening. She had been assured that open maternity wards, at least, were still available in Manhattan.

The executive branch of the Government attempted to ease the squeeze for space by moving offices and bureaus not directly related to the war out of the city. The Patent Office packed up its desks, chairs, file cabinets (and patents), then entrained for Richmond. The Rural Electrification Agency of the Department

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of Agriculture shone its light in St. Louis for the duration, while the Farm Credit Administration hung out its "open for business" sign in Kansas City.

Certain departments of the Civil Service Commission were transferred to Raleigh, North Carolina, while much of the Social Security agency left for Newark. Many of the purely reference offices of other governmental departments were dispersed throughout the nation. Some, including the Army's personnel records office which journeyed to St. Louis along with the REA, would never come home again.

These expedients, although theoretically helpful in solving the office-space crisis, did nothing to ease the housing shortage. Most workers were already rooted in the District of Columbia and nearby Maryland and Virginia. They did not want to move. They liked the area, the parks, the semi-Southern atmosphere, the long springs and autumns, and of course, the excitement of a capital in wartime. Unfortunately for the blueprinters of relocation, it was far easier for them to find another job than to move to another city.

Certainly no one had to rush out of town to escape the enemy. He might have had more reasonable cause for alarm, however, had he known of the antics going on at the Office of Strategic Services. Lethal devices tailored for resistance fighters were the stock-in-trade of this devil-may-care troop of Colonel William J. ("Wild Bill") Donovan. Their laboratories were spread in many unlikely edifices, from such mansions as stately Dumbarton Oaks to immediately post-Civil War structures, such as the old Naval Hospital near the Potomac River.

One afternoon, in a former ward at the latter location, one of the OSS's many professors turned "Moriarty" (as Donovan dubbed them) wished to dispose of a hundred pounds of a flour-like explosive known affectionately as "Aunt Jemima." He dumped it in the toilet and flushed it until the material was all gone.

Then, he informed a co-worker, possessed of more chemical knowledge, what he had done. "My God!" the man gasped.

"When that mixes with gases and other matter in the sewers we'll all be blown sky-high!"

Trying to guess the sluggish course of the powder in the sewers under Washington, which might even have detoured it perilously close to the White House, the State Department, the Navy Department, or the War Department, the Moriarty expected momentarily a deafening blast, a huge eruption of smoke and flame, and then—when the cloud and mess cleared away—maybe no more Executive Mansion.

Happily something went wrong, and "Aunt Jemima" never blew.

On other occasions, generals and admirals in combined Joint Chiefs of Staff sessions prepared to leap for windows when OSS scientists enthusiastically started to demonstrate explosive fountain pens, pocket watches guaranteed to remove their first wearer, or a fiendishly noisy but harmless gadget known as "Hedy Lamarr." Its purpose, like Hedy's, was to distract, not kill—to cover, for example, the escape of an underground agent.

Less violent was the luminous fox project. Washingtonians saw these weirdly painted creatures in Rock Creek Park under leash of their OSS trainers. It was hoped they might cause panic among superstitious Japanese if loosed toward enemy trenches on Pacific Islands. This particular scheme, however, never progressed beyond the borders of Rock Creek Park.

While relatively few were treated to the spectacle of a glowing fox, there were still thrills enough to go around. The atmosphere of the capital city was similar to Hollywood's or Manhattan's except that politicians, military brass, and visiting foreign dignitaries were substituted for movie stars and Broadway entertainers.

At noontime, idlers paused before well-known restaurants along Connecticut and Pennsylvania Avenues, and on 16th Street, confident of a glimpse of Admiral King, General Marshall, the flamboyant Admiral "Bull" Halsey in between Pacific missions, or Senator Tom Connally, of Texas, resembling with his long

hair and floppy bow tie nothing so much as a casting-office version of a congressman.

As an unpredictable bonus, Franklin D. Roosevelt himself occasionally could be fleetingly seen, as he whizzed past in his black limousine flanked by motorcycles and drenched in the scream of their sirens. Once or twice Winston Churchill sat beside him.

Along with the extravaganza and the confusion of a government at war were less apparent but nonetheless significant and often portentous undercurrents. Government involves a continual clash of personalities and minds, and the struggle for dominance in Washington intensified during the war years. Bernard Baruch, himself an expert at such infighting, used the term "vendetta" to describe what went on.

True friendship, camaraderie in the broad sense, respect or admiration for a person for disinterested motives, did not fit easily into the mold and the character of the national capital. While the "miracle of war production" was often described, lost sight of was quite another miracle of magnitude in its own right: that coordination could actually be wrung from officialdom's mad tea party of clashing goals, misunderstandings, jealousies, and hatreds.

Roosevelt had broken with his erstwhile friend and Postmaster General, Jim Farley. In 1944 he did not request the renomination of his Vice-President Henry A. Wallace. Yesterday's meteors could burn into cold clinkers with sobering speed. Political "brain trusters," as well as second-rate ward heelers and fat cats, could disappear as abruptly as they had appeared. The dollar-a-year men—who, as a matter of fact, cost the government more than three thousand dollars a year in per diem and administrative expenses—were especially subject to ephemeral careers.

Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes slugged it out with Henry Wallace, with Roosevelt's confidant Harry Hopkins, and among many others, with the monolithic Secretary of Commerce, Jesse Jones. The latter was flayed by Ickes for "having too much power." As head of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation and numerous related entities, the towering Jones had

been accused of a "penny-wise, pound-foolish reign of tyranny." His most unfortunate decision traced back to 1940 when he would not support synthetic rubber manufacturers because he thought forty cents a pound exorbitant.

"If the United States loses the war," commented the *Nation* magazine, "it will go down to defeat in a thoroughly solvent condition."

The war, far from lost, thundered on. So did Ickes' temper. Donald Nelson, he grudgingly conceded, "had gotten ahead on his energy and ability." It was singular criticism. Then, focusing his wrath beyond Washington, Ickes sought to have the influential publisher of the *Chicago Tribune*, Colonel Robert McCormick, "charged with treason." He did not realize his wish.

Nelson was locked in a tussle of will with Charles Wilson, former president of General Electric, who was heading the Production Committee of WPB. Unable to take orders, chafing and pouting over a thousand differences with the former head of Sears, Roebuck, Wilson periodically submitted and then was persuaded to withdraw his resignation.

With most of the Cabinet officers doubling as board members of the WPB, Nelson held trump cards. It was manifestly an easier matter to override other emergency agencies than to keep tight rein on his own.

Caught up in Washington's own version of nonstop musical chairs and infighting was Elmer Davis, the well-known dry-voiced radio commentator from the Midwest whose job was the immensely important dissemination of war news. Davis, a Hoosier, had been plucked from his microphone by a thoroughly discouraged Roosevelt. Even a whopping thirty-two million dollar publicity budget in the early months of the war had failed to bring order—and information to the public—out of a maze of governmental propaganda bureaus. Their "blizzard of paper," as one frustrated newsman wrote, showering from thousands of mimeograph machines was often the ammunition for interdepartmental rivalry.

Slogans poured out at a brisk pace: "Remember Pearl Harbor" (not a difficult one to devise); or "Remember Pearl, Harder,"

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devised by a wag who sought to inspire "victory knitters"; "Time is Short"; "Don't Let Them Catch Us With Our Plants Down!"; or the succinct "Win the War!"

Neither slogans nor information bureaus by themselves, no matter how dedicated and efficient, could win or come close to winning the war. But improvement was essential, and the first step toward this goal was the establishment of a Division of Information within the WPB.

It took shape in a gleaming prefabricated plywood structure hammered together on a triangle of earth at the intersection of Pennsylvania Avenue and Fifteenth Street, across from the Willard Hotel and the Treasury Department. This smallish office was headed by a former Scripps-Howard editor Lowell Mellett, whose efforts somehow were never accorded a chance for life. His shop, dubbed "Mellett's Madhouse," was soon reduced in authority to an information kiosk for bewildered, roomless, out-of-town businessmen.

Elmer Davis then set up the new Office of War Information. Simultaneously Byron Price, an executive with the Associated Press, assumed the not entirely enviable role of director of the Office of Censorship. His post, as he admitted from the start, was a "dangerous instrument."

A third wartime position in this same general field was that of the head of the Office of Facts and Figures, presided over by Archibald MacLeish, the poet and librarian of Congress.

The spotlight, however, was on Elmer Davis. In a way, he had to sell the war; to explain its unfavorable course to the people and reestablish a reputation for governmental credibility and veracity. Staggered by the magnitude of their defeats in the Pacific, the armed forces had been printing half-truths or vague and misleading communiqués.

"It was not unnatural," Davis observed in characteristic understatement, "that the American public, unable to mistake the general trend of events in the first disastrous months, should have come to the conclusion that while the Japanese radio might exaggerate the damage inflicted on us, its news was far more dependable than that issued by our own Army and Navy."

Publicity officers of the Army and Navy, no doubt with the best of intentions, obscured the true and unsavory picture by playing up stories of individual acts of heroism. Roosevelt himself, in asking for a record \$58,000,000,000 defense budget, plus "at least" \$9,000,000,000 in new taxes, also emphasized these glowing stabs of light in an otherwise dark, grim canvas. It would be a little while before the United States took their cue from Churchill's warning that desperate summer of 1940 that Dunkerques do not add up to victory, not by any stretch of the imagination.

Davis stated that he merely wished to give "the people the news . . . the background information that will help them understand what the news is about." For the most part his efforts would be met by success. Factually and photographically, his OWI chronicled both the course of the war and the mood of the home front: from fifth graders' victory gardens in Boone, Iowa, to beachhead assaults in the Solomon Islands.

His greatest trial was presented in the towering shape of a formidable lieutenant, Robert Sherwood, OWI's overseas director. This tall, famous playwright, Davis complained to the White House, was not only "notoriously slow in answering communications," but spent "most of his time touring the world." Conceding that Sherwood was "an able propagandist," Davis charged nonetheless that "his administration has led to confusion and ineffectiveness."

He believed it was "pretty hard to sail my craft when the first mate permits himself to be put at the head of a mutiny against the skipper."

So, Davis decided to "relieve" this fractious "first mate" of all of his "operating duties." In other words, he would be content if Sherwood retained his job, but with nothing whatsoever to do.

The OWI director, who won his reputation as a newscaster because of keen powers of observation and analysis, had allowed his emotions to blur his judgment. Manifestly, he had lost sight of Sherwood's ties with the White House. The freewheeling author wrote speeches for the President, was an habitué of the Executive Mansion.

The situation finally degenerated to the point where Roosevelt summoned both to his study, the Oval Room. There, as Davis was to recall, the President "told us that he wished he had a good long ruler, the kind schoolboys' hands got slapped with when he was in school, that he was God-damned mad at both of us. . . ."

The squire of Hyde Park then reaffirmed, using the Navy expression for banishment, that he did not wish either "to send Sherwood to Guam" or to accept Davis' resignation. The result was a cool truce—not too unsatisfactory a compromise in a city rife with crackling hostilities.

Davis couldn't win all of his battles. He lost another in his efforts to obtain press coverage at the trial of the Nazi saboteurs. A total of eight had been landed by submarines near Amagansett, Long Island, in June 1942, and at Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida. They had been apprehended by the Coast Guard, through residents phoning the FBI and through their own surrender. After a trial shrouded heavily with secrecy, six of the group were electrocuted.

The OWI never really possessed the prestige to prevail over an entrenched department of the Federal Government if it forcibly asserted itself. In his darker hours, Davis at least had the sympathy of his counterpart in World War I, George Creel, chairman of the Committee on Public Information. He wrote from San Francisco: ¹

" . . . you have a man in the White House who does not like to see anyone get the blue slip. Particularly when they have paid him the tribute of personal loyalty I am more sorry than I can say that your control over Army, Navy and State is not real in any sense of the word while you may think you have established an arrangement that will permit a free flow of the news, just wait until an issue arises. The whole success of the C.P.I. was due to the fact that neither the Army nor the Navy had the right to sit in arbitrary judgment on what should or should not be printed. Time after time they disputed my authority and I won out only because Woodrow Wilson hammered them down. . . ."

¹ Letter in The Elmer Davis collection, Library of Congress.

Washington was a city that tested, tried, and often broke its leaders. Joseph ("Joe") Eastman, Office of Defense transportation expediter, died in harness in 1944. Donald Nelson left later the same year, not many months after Leon Henderson resigned. The WPB boss had made good his promise that if he could not do the "right kind of job," then "why the hell should I stay and eat my heart out?"

Nelson's functions were assumed by James F. Byrnes, the all-powerful director of War Mobilization. The personable, veteran South Carolina politician was not only a former Senator but a former Supreme Court Justice as well.

Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox dropped dead at his Washington apartment in April 1944 (to be succeeded by his assistant, the New York lawyer James V. Forrestal). Roosevelt's first Secretary of the Navy, Claude A. Swanson, had also died in office, as had his first Secretary of War, George H. Dern.

The health of many during the war years amounted to a medical nightmare. This was true of the President himself, Harry Hopkins, and Cordell Hull. Marguerite ("Missy") Le Hand, Roosevelt's faithful and able secretary, had lingered for three years, after suffering a stroke in 1941.

When those of a documentary turn of mind sought to capture the often elusive character of Washington, they grasped at statistics in the hopes of etching in the flat lines and conveying life and dimension to those beyond the capital's borders. They cited the 25 per cent increase in population since Pearl Harbor, the shrunken fleet of approximately five thousand taxicabs available to transport a population of nearly a million, the seventeen thousand weekly business visitors (or was it *daily*? Numbers themselves began to blur so and lose all meaning), the twenty-five thousand cups of coffee reportedly swallowed each day in the Pentagon's cafeterias, the sixty-one hundred bedroom Arlington Farms "girls town" to shelter the unattached female population, in or out of uniform—a joy for comparison-minded authors with their lists of small cities overshadowed by the Arlington design for female living, the new feeling of neighborliness arising from the enforced fashion in car pools. . . .

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Writers of reputation attempted to trap the caprice of the nation's governing city, then hurry this ephemera onto paper before it should dissolve once again into its peculiarly frustrating limbo. John Dos Passos, Bernard De Voto, A. J. Liebling, and Bruce Catton were but a few of this optimistic, quixotic multitude. The larger magazines, including *Time*, *Life*, *Look*, the *Reader's Digest* and an ever-assured *Esquire*, along with the metropolitan dailies, sent in successive reporters, like substitutes moving in and out of a football game.

More than one, male and female, despairingly banged the desk top down on today to reminisce about a seemingly more tangible, obvious, and communicative yesterday. They were inspired in all likelihood by Margaret Leech's Pulitzer Prize-winning work, *Reveille in Washington*. Published in 1941, it was a graphic, meticulous account of the city during the Civil War.

Possibly therein lay the answer. Another century may have to pass before a generation, aided by time's perspective, can adequately and truly portray and explain Washington in a later period of challenge—World War II.

CHAPTER 8

In the Urgency of War

THE NATION'S industrial might increased, month by month, although the challenge was Herculean and the way beset by pitfalls. Almost by the time General MacArthur had established headquarters in Australia, following his dramatic flight from Corregidor, nearly sixteen thousand new plants, most of them government-owned, dotted the productive face of America. Some were already turning out the implements of war.

Old processes and concepts alike were ripped apart, and new ones substituted. Steel producers, for example, could build a blast furnace in six, instead of the customary nine or ten, months. Round-the-clock shifts and technical shortcuts lopped off the approximately three additional months.

The time saved meant an additional fifty-five thousand tons of pig iron, enough to be converted into steel for a bonus of four aircraft carriers or eight cruisers. Overhaul and relining time of furnaces was cut from a month or more to approximately three weeks.

Since transportation of war goods was accorded high priority, component parts of the finished product—whether a small electric motor or a large warship—could be efficiently produced in plants scattered at the far corners of the nation. Hardly a state in the Union did not contribute something to the birth of an airplane, including protective paper wrappings from Maine, tires

from Ohio, lacquers from South Carolina, and polishing abrasives from Arizona.

Communities which had been quite unfamiliar beyond their own signposts suddenly blossomed and flourished like the gold-rush towns of the last century. Springfield, Vermont, home to a population of no more than five thousand, became a mecca for purchasing agents. Springfield's specialty was machine tools.

Elkton, Maryland, long the fireworks capital of the United States, switched its explosive talents toward more serious purposes than Fourth of July celebrations.

Basement lathe shops which had been turning out many of the products of peacetime, including even gas meters and potato chip machinery, switched to an unfamiliar catalogue of wares: gun barrels, firing mechanisms, cartridge cases, periscope mounts, helmet liners, canteens, a list that covered many pages in governmental inventories.

The A. C. Gilbert Company, in New Haven, discovered that tiny electric-train motors could also be used for operating airborne navigational instruments. Milwaukee's A. O. Smith Corporation, which had manufactured bicycles in the 1870's, then shifted to horseless-carriage frames, and during World War I turned out the first hundred pound aerial bombs, was back at the old stand in World War II.

The company produced many of the Air Force's highly destructive block busters. It also furnished much of the trans-continental big- and little-inch pipelines—for carrying petroleum in a manner at last impervious to U-boat attack.

Corporations, large and small, were matching their versatility against the needs of war. The giants, however, took as well the giant's share. At the end of September 1944, for example, the country's hundred largest companies were turning out 75 per cent of the \$175,000,000 so far awarded to the "prime contractors," numbering altogether 18,539.

Among them, Du Pont, with a history dating back to Revolutionary times, was turning out mountains of explosives. The total would reach four and a half billion pounds of smokeless powder

before war's end—an amount 20 per cent greater than the entire volume used by all the Allies during World War I.

Du Pont erected its Indiana Ordnance Works, one of the world's largest, near Charlestown, Indiana, in eight months. Nearly twenty-eight thousand workmen were employed in its construction. The plant produced more than a billion pounds of smokeless powder and near the end of the war added a sideline: rocket propellants.

The same company also declared war on insects and related pests with veritable batteries upon batteries of DDT sprays. Cellophane to wrap items from hard biscuits to cartridge boxes became more familiar to G. I. Joe than to the folks back home. Du Pont also aided his health with vitamins and his recovery from wounds with antiseptics. More than forty million gallons of paint and other finishes flowed from the company's many plants.

Among its vast offering of synthetics, Du Pont's rubber substitute, neoprene, and the adaptable nylon remained much in demand by the military. Nylon replaced silk for parachutes and fabric cords in vehicular and aircraft tires. Twice as strong as manila rope, it was also used for glider tows, anchor cables, and moorings for barrage balloons, as well as in self-sealing hose lines and fuel tanks, shoe laces, armor vests, jungle hammocks, boots, and in tooth and paint brushes.

General Dynamics, a younger giant on the American scene, believed the ability to train unskilled workers for skilled operations had much to do with the war of production. A privately printed and distributed history of its many subsidiaries has noted:

The answer lies in the American genius for systematic planning and organization. As applied to the aircraft industry, this meant a division of labor so elaborate that most tasks could be performed by unskilled workers. In 1942, nearly 40 per cent of Consolidated Vultee's workers were women new to industry. There was also the aircraft industry's system of "flexible mass production" which avoided the standardization of World War I by using removable jigs and fixtures on standard machines to allow for frequent design changes while

in production. To accomplish a quick expansion of facilities, consumer goods plants, especially in the automotive industry, were converted to aircraft production, and a nationwide system of subcontracting was worked out which even embraced small parts "household feeder shops," a system started by Convair to utilize the labor of people near their own homes. Finally, individual aircraft firms cooperated in every aspect of production through regional councils.

Aircraft production was augmented by the automobile industry. Ford turned out Liberator bombers at a half-mile-long assembly plant—Willow Run—west of Detroit. Studebaker built B-17 and B-29 engines for Wright Aeronautical. Packard arranged to construct six thousand Rolls Royce engines for Great Britain, three thousand for the United States.

New shops of old aviation concerns dotted the country. Boeing of Seattle flowed over into an annex at Renton, Washington; Martin did the same at Omaha far from its Baltimore headquarters. Consolidated opened a huge plant at Fort Worth.

Recalling changes within the youthful industry, Solar Aircraft Company of San Diego, major producer of engine manifolds, wrote in its magazine, the *Blast*:

Time-clocks appeared, signaling the end of the happy family time-keeping era. The PBX house phones continued to malfunction . . .

To these basic buildings, shortly to be knit together by an overhead camouflage net of turkey feathers which made everyone sneeze and itch, were added penthouses, sheds and outbuildings to house oxygen tanks and pickle vats. The bay came right down to the back of the plant, and at lunch you could dangle your toes in the water and watch, unknowing, the carriers and transports assembling for the big battles to come . . . at night, the rats took over, monstrous creatures that scurried in and out of a murderous-looking sump by the pickle shed. Sump and sheds disappeared when caustic descaling was introduced mid-war; dredgers and the new Harbor Drive finished the cozy dock-side luncheons (there was also a memo about not throwing rocks at the sea gulls) . . . the ghosts of the fish canneries lingered late at San Diego. . . .

. . . as the draft calls bit deeper and deeper and Solar men reported for duty, the lines *really* began to fill up with women. There were already more women than men at the Des Moines plant, still

racing to get equipment and tooling. In San Diego, 30 Indian girls from the Sherman Institute were certified out from the growing San Diego Vocational School and took their places at the welding benches. Housewives, teachers, wives, and sweethearts with men in service—they added a colorful note to the cigar-chewing, clattering man's world in Solar shops. And problems, too. The business-like little figure of the Duchess—Viele Hardy—began to move through the benches, easily spotted by an ever-changing tiara of flowers. Babies, transportation, housing, rides—she listened to all the women's worries with a sympathetic but firm ear

The naval battles in and around the slot of Guadalcanal were bitter with heavy losses to both the Japs—and to us, and every Solarite in the two cities was conscious that the parts we were making—manifolds for the B-24's, B-17's, P-38's and PBM's—were a vital part of the struggle.

Auxiliary first-aid classes were now being organized on all three shifts and the whole San Diego plant was training fire-fighting crews transportation problems were being met with the offering of 90 bicycles to employees at the now nostalgic price of \$28 each. Solar's rationing office came into being, through which went endless arguments on 'B' and 'C' gas books, tires and pairs of rubbers. We lived with stamps and red coupons and marched sleepily off to work in creaking car pools and responded with banner quotas to the many bond drives. . . .

Energy of this caliber was translated into a peak aircraft production in the 1943-44 twelve-month period of 90 thousand aircraft (34.5 per cent fighters and reconnaissance, 21 per cent medium and light bombers, the remainder training, cargo, transport, and other types of utility planes.

Aviation industry quotas were later cut back, partly because of lower than expected combat losses. This was likewise true in the aluminum industry where 1943's output of 1,100,000 tons was reduced 10 per cent for 1944's quotas. And the synthetic-rubber goals were also exceeded.

Perhaps in this battle of production the nation's transportation network was too much taken for granted. While motor vehicles and cargo planes gained in importance, the same system that aided the Union armies in winning the Civil War carried the bulk of the load: the railroads. They transported more than forty-

three million members of the armed forces, sometimes as many as a million a month, and hauled nearly one third of a billion tons of freight.

"The longest continuous miracle in transportation history" was the Association of American Railroads' understandably prejudiced estimate of their membership's wartime performance.

The group added: "Many doubted it could be done. A decade of depression had weakened the railroads, forced one-third of them into bankruptcy. But they hung on, their plant was preserved. As the world soon learned, capacity of that plant surpassed belief.

"Hurriedly, the trains rolled again. By 1943, the whole burden of national war effort sat squarely on ribbons of steel. New cars and trucks were a thing of the past; tires and gasoline had disappeared 97 per cent of the troops and 90 per cent of all military materials and supplies moved by rail."

Extra sections were hitched on to what already were tagged "extra sections" to handle troop movements as well as the multitudes of servicemen traveling under individual orders to new duty stations, ports of embarkation, or merely on furloughs.

Produced during the war were nearly 168,000 freight plus 2,800 troop and Army kitchen cars, as well as 2,907 new locomotives, also 8,000 locomotives and 103,000 freight cars consigned for overseas. The railroads, however, never seemed to stay really ahead.

About half of the new equipment was replacement for worn-out stock. All through the war there was also a shortage of nearly a hundred thousand railroad men, snatched away by General Hershey's seemingly insatiable Selective Service. And after the war it would be downgrade again for the railroads as their rivals on the highway and in the air chipped away more and more of what even in father's time had been pretty much an unchallenged business. The popularization of the powerful and highly efficient Diesel locomotive and of the light-weight, quiet-riding passenger car were not in themselves sufficient to reverse the trend to other forms of transportation.

The Government was slower in answering the priority wants

of city transit operators. By the end of 1942, the backlog of buses and trolleys was exhausted. The armed forces were taking all large vehicles for their own use. It seemed that more and more cities would follow the example of Washington where so many men and women were bicycling that the nation's capital was being dubbed, "Amsterdam on the Potomac."

The Bus and Electric Railway Section of the WPB found to its considerable distress that others in the emergency warrens of Government had the remarkable notion that private automobiles could operate *ad infinitum* on recapped tires covered by a few ounces of camelback, while "mass production vehicles with high load capacities" were profligate with their precious rubber.

By scraping and scrounging for materials that had been overlooked, this section accomplished what had seemed impossible in the desperate, improbable early months of 1942. Whereas new street cars had slumped to an insignificant total of thirty in 1943, nearly three hundred were built in 1944, together with almost enough parts for the old models. Once again young lovers were able to sit on cane seats and hold hands, while the trolleys clattered off to midnight shifts in the defense plant.

Bus production soared from 1,546 in 1943 to nearly 5,000 in 1944, even though community transportation had been and remained a stepchild as far as priorities were involved.

Farm machinery, too, was a touch-and-go matter. International Harvester, one of the farmer's mainstays in the twentieth century, had received the largest single order for light tanks—aggregating thirty million dollars. This diverted both factory space and workers away from other production.

"As war areas expanded," reported the WPB, "more and more material was transferred from boats to beaches, then to trucks, and from trucks to depots. The greatest need was for the rubber-tired cranes which moved quickly from one lift to the next. The annual production of rubber-tired cranes and shovels increased steadily from approximately 250 machines in 1939 to 3,000 in 1944, but no active theater of operations had an adequate supply."

Each crane, in effect, represented a tractor or some other

110 In the Urgency of War

heavy piece of farm machinery that some farmer would not get. Only 35,000 of the 209,000 tractors called for in 1943 were actually manufactured. Production of plows and cultivators lagged in proportion.

"Victory model" substitutes were faintly proposed but howled down by the customers who would have had to use them. They envisioned cheap working parts, soft metals, and very likely, wooden bumpers and mudguards. Farmers wanted no part of second- or third-grade machinery.

However, after the Normandy invasion, when a vital new optimism was infecting Washington, 361,000 tons of carbon steel were "unfrozen" from virtually inaccessible priorities. Farm implements began to reappear on the market.

Radio and electronics experienced, not too surprisingly, a robust growth in the war. This relative newcomer to American manufacturing had mushroomed by 1943 into a two billion dollar business.

By prewar home standards, the prices seemed exorbitant. Where a tube might have cost twenty-five cents, at the most a dollar or two, similar parts for a military set ranged from five or ten dollars to hundreds of dollars for the intricate, large cathode rays in radar sets. Even the most basic electronic paraphernalia was compelled to meet exacting armed services' requirements.

Many items had to tolerate temperature fluctuations ranging from a bone-chilling minus forty degrees centigrade to a broiling plus seventy degrees centigrade, and at the same time withstand the abuse that only a speed-maddened young G.I. jeep driver could dish out over, say, the rocky Burma road.

The electronics industry would be ready for a postwar world of cheap radios and not-so-cheap television sets. Plastics would also blast off from their wartime launching toward apparently an infinite galaxy of markets. There were obviously many other examples of positive results from endeavors aimed at otherwise destructive goals.

But the war effort did not pound unerringly ahead with the dynamic and patriotic singleness of purpose the posters might have led the naïve to believe. It jumped the track often.

From a well-packed Pandora's box sprang strikes, management piques, housing shortages, and bottlenecks in production and transportation that seemingly defied solution. These vexations kept federal coordinators and others burning their office lights into the dawning hours.

One of the crucial problems was public housing. A National Housing Agency was put together to aid the hopelessly swamped Federal Housing Administration. Before long, no less than sixteen federal bureaus had a finger in the bedding and shelter problem. The result of this mass effort, as one observer wryly commented, was a "formless heap."

A new one-billion-dollar building program, personally ordered by Roosevelt, succeeded in erecting more than four hundred thousand housing units. This did not begin to satisfy the needs. Migrant labor, as most of it was in defense plants, no matter how eligible for housing, had to make do. Men, women, and families were compelled to squeeze into second-class apartments and drab rooms in ancient boarding houses. It was World War I on the home front all over again.

Clusters of trailers, unsightly and frequently flimsy contraptions, mushroomed on the fringes of such booming areas as Norfolk, with its huge shipbuilding yard and Navy base; San Diego, with its Navy installations and aircraft factories; and Detroit, producer of tanks and other heavy vehicles as well as airplanes.

The demand for trailers was so great that they became black-market items. Their value soared until a worker, flush with overtime pay, was happy to put several thousand dollars down and sign a note for hundreds more. It did not even seem to matter much that the trailer might have already been used, the beds "warm" and dirty dishes still cluttering the sink.

One contractor conceived the notion of a "canvas camp"—almost as bad as its uninviting *nom de plume*. This settlement, which consisted of two- or three-room units of plywood construction set on concrete piers, in place of cellar, with flat, tar-shingle roofs, was located next to a magnesium plant. The workers, many of whom had been placing their doormats before tents and trucks, were happy to pay three thousand dollars apiece for these

drafty, tinderlike contrivances. Although these "houses" could last only three or four years without warping and probably collapsing, their main drawback was that the speculator had located this newly formed community downwind from the plant. When there was any breeze at all, it seemed to the residents that they were only short gasps away from asphyxiation by chlorine gas.

"Prefabs" came into their own, more durable than some of the jerry-built wartime housing but generally eyesores in their own right. Occupants preferred to think of them as "demountables"—optimistically implying they could be "demounted" and burned after the war.

It was a tribute to local health officials that no serious epidemics ran amok in these plywood and canvas "jungles" and trailer parks. Sanitation left much to be desired; sometimes it was almost nonexistent. And the inadequacies of the workers' homes helped keep the poolrooms, saloons, and brothels in nearby communities playing almost around the clock to capacity crowds.

The most successful emergency housing was adapted from Army barracks architecture, which was, if nothing else, a long-proven blueprint. On the hard Tennessee soil Army engineers created almost overnight the state's fifth largest city—Oak Ridge—where lived the seventy-eight thousand who called the hush-hush Manhattan Project their own as they pioneered the infinitely complex atomic bomb. Far from resembling barracks, some of the houses were built of imitation stone, and placed in landscaped surroundings at angles that interrupted the monotony of mathematically straight patterns. This imaginative warborn community was obviously tailored, as well, for peacetime.

There was, however, discord on the home front far worse than housing bottlenecks, priority imbroglios, shortage of critical materials, or Washington's perennial personality collisions. Certainly among the most shameful and deplorable blots was the race rioting that occurred during the steaming summer of 1943.

On a hot Sunday afternoon, June twentieth, in Detroit, a Negro and a white started to fight. Such an incident was not unusual in this industrial city where former sharecroppers from the

South, attracted by high wage rates, had swollen the population to two million. Neither black nor white was prepared for the degree of overcrowding that this massive migration of workers forced upon the community. This fact had been underscored bloodily enough the previous year when soldiers were summoned to quell a riot in the city's Sojourner Truth Housing project.

The personal tussle spread quickly beyond all proportion or reason to mass fighting in the streets and alleys. A policeman who tried to intervene was knocked down, disarmed, and shot six times with his own revolver. In a few hours, the teeming north and east sides of town were rocked by a full-grown riot. It did not abate that night or with the dawning of Monday.

On Tuesday martial law was declared by Governor Harry Kelly. Steel-helmeted troops from Fort Custer with fixed bayonets and tear-gas shells in their belts took command of the stricken, battered city.

Twenty-five Negroes and nine whites were dead—many of them from police or state troopers' bullets. Hundreds were injured. Five hundred were arrested, of whom more than one hundred would stand trial.

The United States had not witnessed so serious a race riot since World War I. It was matched in virulent intensity only by the Civil War's draft riots.

Beaumont, Texas, was already under martial law at this time. Rioting had broken out on June sixteenth, following the alleged rape of a white woman by a Negro shipyard worker. Much damage had been done to person and property by the time the authorities ascertained that the woman had not really been assaulted after all.

Mobile, Alabama, was shaken by a "hate" strike as it was properly labeled. In Marianne, Florida, a Negro murder suspect was hauled from jail and lynched. In Chester, Pennsylvania, five Negro worker-demonstrators were shot and wounded by overly apprehensive shipyard guards.

In early August five were killed and four hundred wounded in Harlem in a riot touched off by complaints over exorbitant rents

and inadequate housing. Before state guardsmen marched in and a curfew was proclaimed by Mayor La Guardia, five million dollars in damage was done.

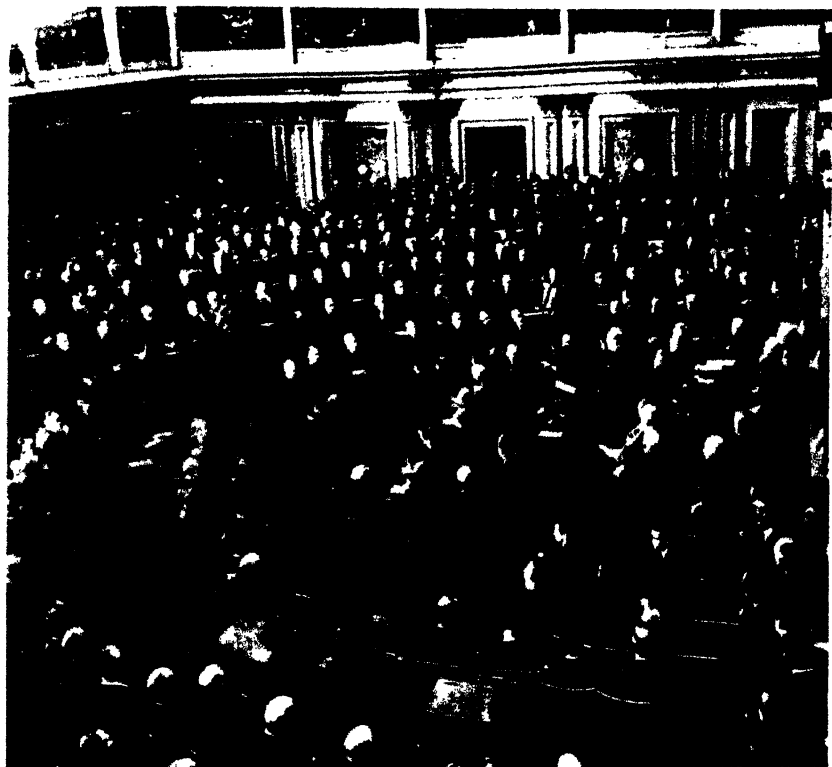
Racial overtones were also evident in the civil strife triggered by the zoot-suiters of Los Angeles. These were predominantly Mexican youths, with some Negro disciples, between the ages of sixteen and twenty. They wore absurdly long coats with padded shoulders, porkpie hats completed by a feather in back, watch chains so long they almost touched the ground, and peg-top trousers tapering to narrow cuffs.

The zoot-suiters were undoubtedly the most preposterous of all who defied law and order. At best, as one pundit observed, they were "not characterized primarily by intellect." They formed themselves into bands with flamboyant names: the "Mateo Bombers," "Main Street Zooters," "The Califa," "Sleepy Lagooners," "The Black Legion," and many more.

Their targets for physical harm were members of the armed forces, with a special predilection for sailors. The latter fought back with devastating spirit. The situation quickly deteriorated to the point that the Navy declared Los Angeles temporarily out of bounds. The city council outlawed the wearing of zoot suits for the duration and the city simmered down.

There was much difference of opinion on what caused the summer's bloodshed on the home front. Explanations ranged from professional analysis of a sociological nature to blunt assertions that Nazi agents and far rightists were the instigators. The riots did have some positive effects. National and local councils were formed to study and, if possible, prevent future outbreaks. Governors, mayors, ministers, civic leaders, and much of the press and radio assumed an active lead in more than a hundred groups organized overnight. The largest of these was the American Council on Race Relations, established in Chicago.

Whether or not the so-called seditionists, many of whom came from the Great Lakes area, had directly or indirectly incited the riots, the Justice Department in 1944 made a determined effort to send twenty-six American fascists and extremists to jail. Indicted on formal charges of sedition were a motley lot that in-



FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT LIBRARY

Prime Minister Winston Churchill addressing Congress on December 26, 1941. With memories of Pearl Harbor still vivid, Churchill's words brought some encouragement to a nation not yet quite ready for war.

Right, firemen hose down the French luxury liner Normandie, in flames at the Forty-Second Street pier in Manhattan. The fire broke out on February 9, 1942, just two days before she was scheduled to go into wartime service.



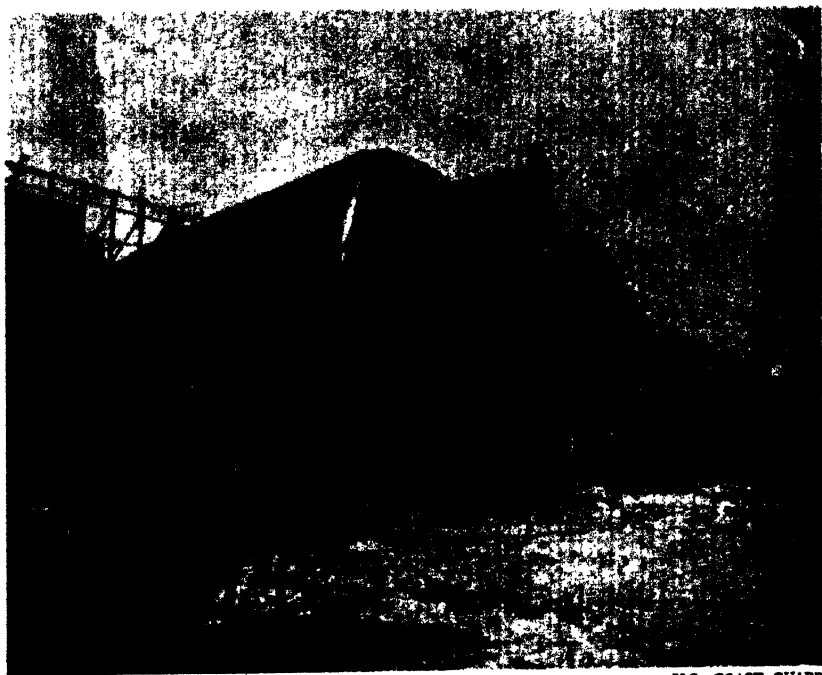
U.S. INFORMATION AGENCY

Carole Lombard and Clark Gable photographed together when their engagement was announced in 1939. Miss Lombard met her death in an airplane crash in January 1942, en route to Hollywood from a war bond rally in Indianapolis.

Right, the Normandie lies capsized on the North River's mud bottom after the fire.



U.S. COAST GUARD



U.S. COAST GUARD



U.S. ARMY

Fears of "enemy aliens," generated in large measure by wartime hysteria, reached a climax in mid-February 1942. More than 100,000 niseis—Japanese-Americans—living on the West Coast were forced to leave their homes, jobs, and businesses, and move to relocation centers farther inland. Here the evacuees assemble in San Francisco for their assigned destinations.

Right above, a little boy waves good-bye just before setting out for his resettlement camp. Right, Aerial view of a Japanese relocation center near Parker, Arizona. Japanese-Americans lived here under martial law, guarded by American troops.



U.S. ARMY



U.S. ARMY



U.S. ARMY



U.S. ARMY

Left, efforts were made to prepare the civilian population for a possible enemy gas attack. The masks these civilian defense students are using date from World War I.



TENN. CONSERVATION DEPT.

Sergeant Alvin C. York, World War I hero (shown here gesturing with his hand) headed the Fentress County, Tennessee, Selective Service Board. If a draftee appealed his case, York and his fellow board members would often discuss the matter with the man on his own front porch.

Left, with FDR and other officials assembled to watch the drawing, Secretary of War Henry Stimson, blindfolded, prepares to draw the name of the first Selective Service draftee on October 29, 1940.

VITAL WAR INDUSTRIES MARKED FOR DESTRUCTION BY GERMAN HIGH COMMAND

\$475,300 FURNISHED SABOTEURS BY NAZIS
\$474,988 RECOVERED BY FBI



PILE OF EXPLOSIVE CHARGE SOUTH
OF JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA



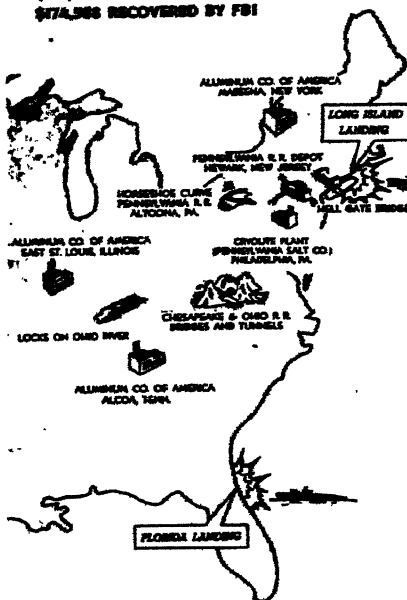
FBI AGENTS EXAMINING BOXES OF
EXPLOSIVES



FBI AGENTS DIGGING FOR EXPL.-
TIME DELAY SET BEARING IN
BORGALOUND



PHOTOGRAPH SHOWING BOXES IN
CACHE



BLOCK OF TNT DISGUISED AS A
LUMP OF COAL

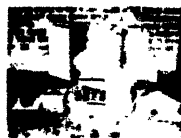


PEN AND PENCIL SET CONTAINING
AN INCENDIARY DEVICE



EXAMINATION OF TNT BLOCK FROM
CACHE, TECHNICAL LABORATORY FBI

CONTENTS OF BOX FROM EXPL.-
TIME CACHE SHOWING ELECTRIC
BLASTING CAPS, PEN AND PENCIL
DELAY DEVICES, DETONATORS, AP-
PROXES OF ACES AND OTHER TIME
DELAY DEVICES



FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

In two separate landings, one in Florida, the other on Long Island, a small group of enemy agents entered the United States in June 1942. They planned to sabotage strategic industrial centers. Eight of these agents were quickly captured; six received the death sentence in a trial from which the press was excluded.



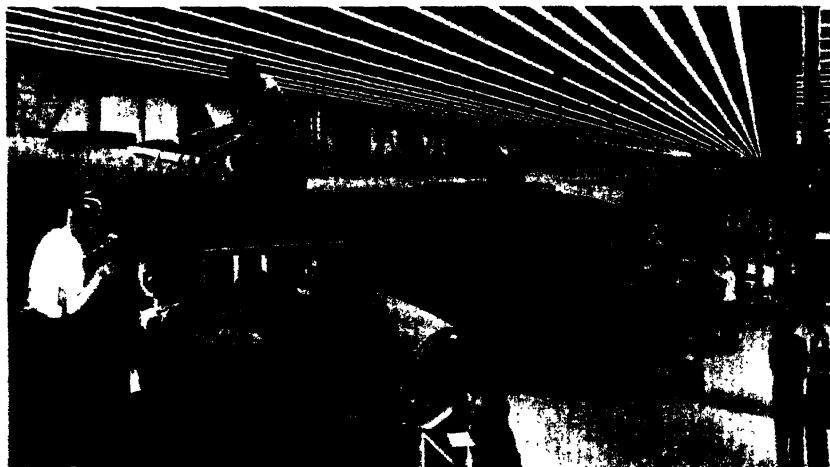
USO

On February 21, 1943, this USO troupe posed before boarding a Pan-American Clipper for Europe. They are, standing in the back row, Tamara (Swann), a Russian-born singer; Yvette (Elsa Harris), vocalist; Roy Rognan and Lorraine Rognan, who made up a comedy dance team; and, seated, Jane Froman, popular singer; Gypsy Markoff, accordionist; and Grace Drysdale, puppeteer. The next day, the airplane crashed in the River Tagus, Lisbon, killing Tamara, who made famous "Smoke Gets In Your Eyes," and Roy Rognan. Miss Froman and Miss Markoff were seriously injured.

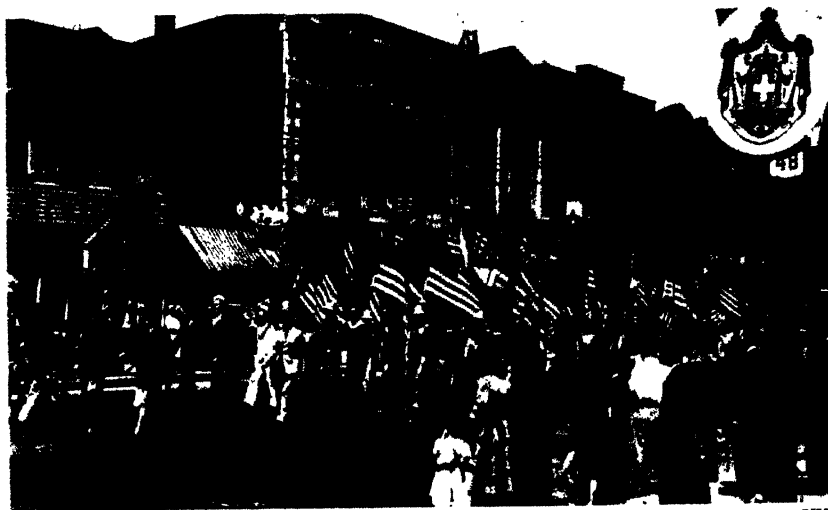


FORD MOTOR COMPANY

Wartime demands for planes, tanks, and other matériel created a need for additional production plants and manpower—thus virtually ending the unemployment problem of the 1930's. Above, Ford's much-publicized Willow Run bomber plant is shown. Below, women work at jobs formerly reserved for men.



DOUGLAS AIRCRAFT COMPANY



OWI

Parades along Main Street took place throughout the war. But they lacked the enthusiasm and patriotic fervor of the Liberty Loan marchers in 1917-18. Below, Henry J. Kaiser, Sr., introduced new techniques and methods to speed the building of Liberty ships and other vessels. He is shown here with his wife, Bess, addressing Kaiser shipyard workers in 1944.



KAISER INDUSTRIES CORP.



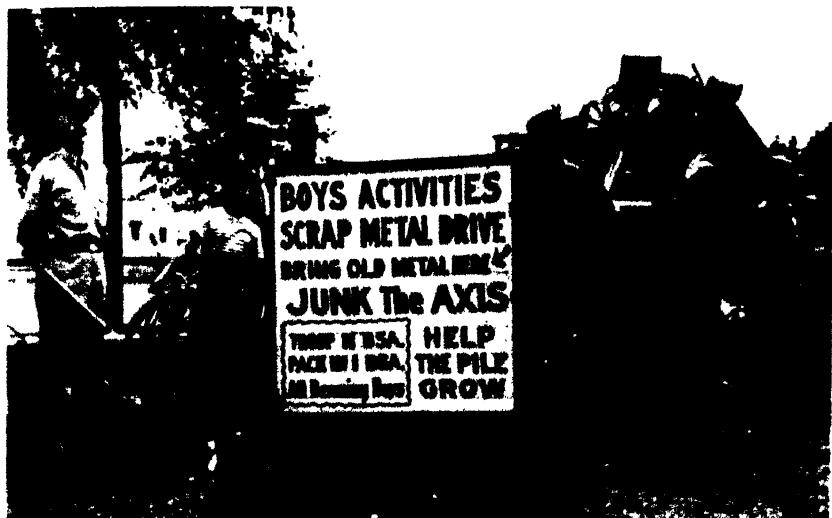
Railroads were the keystone of the transportation system, but despite the addition of new rolling stock, they never fully recovered from the depression of the 1930's. Transportation of troops and essential supplies received priority and travelers like these in Pennsylvania Station, New York City, learned to accept long delays.

Eleanor Roosevelt's appointment of Mayris Chaney, the dancer, to head the children's division of a physical-fitness program aroused opposition from some members of Congress. Below, Mrs. Roosevelt with Mayris Chaney Martin at the 1960 Democratic Convention in Los Angeles.

OWI



RANDOLPH FISHER STUDIO



U.S. ARMY

Scrap metal drives, frequently organized by local Boy Scouts, were a familiar sight in cities and towns throughout the land. Old license plates, worn-out bicycles, and other metal objects eventually found their way into the nation's war machinery. Below, college campuses across the country assumed a new look—even before the passage of the first veterans' G.I. bill. These young men in naval uniform are students at Rice Institute, Houston, Texas.





FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT LIBRARY

This photograph, taken March 29, 1945, in Washington, D.C., is probably the last of FDR. Two weeks later he was dead.

CERTIFICATE OF DEATH
GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

County file NO.: 4979

State File No. _____

1. Name of Death		2. Usual Residence of Deceased		3. R. File No.	
(a) County <u>Marion</u> (b) Sex <u>Male</u> (c) Age <u>70</u>		(a) State <u>New York</u> (b) County <u>Dutchess</u>			
(a) City or Town <u>Hyde Park, Ga.</u> (b) Date of Death <u>April 12, 1945</u>		(a) City or Town <u>Hyde Park</u> (b) Date of Death <u>April 12, 1945</u>			
(a) Length of Stay <u>1 Year</u> (b) Cause of Death <u>Cerebral Hemorrhage</u>		(a) Length of Stay <u>1 Year</u> (b) Cause of Death <u>Cerebral Hemorrhage</u>			
4. Full Name <u>Franklin Delano Roosevelt</u>		5. Usual Residence of Deceased <u>Hyde Park, N.Y.</u>		6. Social Security Number <u>1-30-1882</u>	
7. Date of Death <u>April 12, 1945</u>		8. Time of Death <u>3:35 P.M.</u>		9. Place of Death <u>Hyde Park, N.Y.</u>	
10. Sex <u>Male</u> 11. Race <u>White</u> 12. Marital Status <u>Married</u>		13. Date of Birth <u>Jan 30, 1882</u>		14. Place of Birth <u>Hyde Park, N.Y.</u>	
15. Occupation <u>President of United States of America</u>		16. Cause of Death <u>Cerebral Hemorrhage</u>		17. Contributory Cause <u>Arterio Sclerosis</u>	
18. Signature of Physician <u>Howard T. Bruenn</u>		19. Signature of Coroner <u>Hiram A. Hadaway</u>		20. Signature of Registrar <u>F.N. Patterson</u>	

CERTIFIED COPY

State of Georgia

County of Marion

I hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of a record on file in this office.

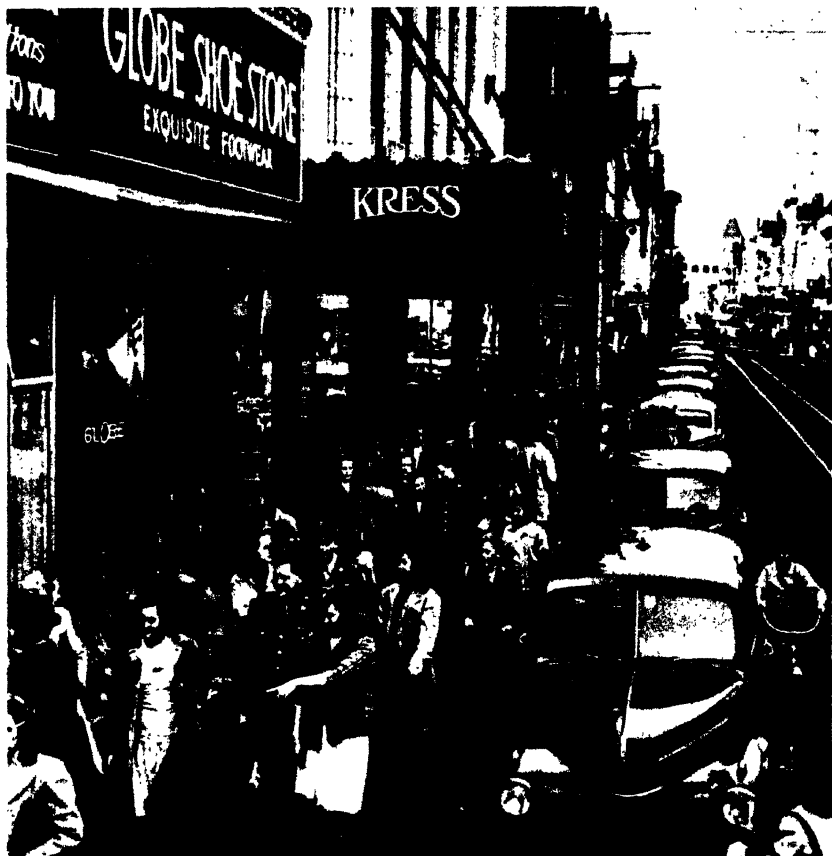
(Signed)

John H. Hays
County Clerk

6841

6841 128

Roosevelt died in Warm Springs, Georgia, on April 12, 1945. The death certificate notes a cerebral hemorrhage as the primary cause of death with arteriosclerosis as a contributory cause.



U.S. ARMY

Men in uniform, a federal windshield sticker prominently displayed on every motor vehicle, ration stamps to buy gasoline, tires, sugar, shoes, meat, and coffee were everyday reminders that the nation was at war. Here is King Street, Charleston, South Carolina, several months before V-J Day.

cluded among others William Dudley Pelley, sporting a Van Dyke beard and the uniform of his militantly anti-Semitic Silver Shirt Legion; George Deatherage, West Virginia sponsor of the Knights of the White Camellia; the Reverend Gerald B. Winrod, publisher of the viciously racist magazine *Defender*; Lawrence Dennis, Harvard graduate, "outspoken follower of Hitler", and publisher of the "Weekly Foreign Letter"; Joseph E. McWilliams, one of the youngest and probably the handsomest of the defendants, chief consul of the Christian Mobilizers, who referred to President Roosevelt as "the Jew King"; Elizabeth Dilling, enthusiastic participant at the 1938 Nuremberg Nazi Party Congress, who caused incalculable damage to some broadcasters with her book *The Red Network*; Ellis O. Jones, hailed by his cohorts for a poem, "Beware the Wily Jew," which might have been penned by Joseph Goebbels himself; Gerald L. K. Smith, of the America First party; James True, publisher and distributor of hate literature who sought to "return the United States from a Talmudic dictatorship to the original Republican form of government," agreeing with the other seditionists that "the present war was planned and started by Jewish influence") and Lois de Lafayette Washburn, a fragile, birdlike lady from Chicago who founded the National Liberty party, enjoyed giving Nazi salutes in public, and frequently lashed out at photographers' cameras with her umbrella.

The trial, as Attorney General Biddle observed, "turned into a concentrated effort to wear out Judge [Edward C.] Eicher." It lasted from April to November 30, 1944, when the Washington jurist, exhausted, dropped dead. The dreary, frustrating episode thus ended in an anticlimactic mistrial.

A rather large number of spies and peddlers of hate literature were not so successful in escaping the net cast by Biddle's department and other governmental agencies which put snooping and eavesdropping on a mass scientific basis.

The Canadian-Austrian Grace Buchanan-Dineen, for example, went to prison for attempting to funnel Willow Run production figures to Germany. The attractive twenty-four-year-old admirer of the Nazis, who sometimes tagged herself baroness and

admitted she was "a sort of Mata Hari," had committed the unpardonable professional blunder of using a code so obvious that a smart schoolboy could have broken it in an evening.

Far more bizarre was the case of fifty-year-old Mrs. Velvalee Dickinson who managed a doll and doll-repair shop in New York City. The diminutive, gray-blond was charged with violating the censorship laws by attempting to convey to the Japanese, via a South American go-between, information of naval and convoy operations.

Her first letter came into the hands of the FBI through a curious circumstance. She had given as a return address on the envelope the name of a San Francisco woman, picked at random from the phone book. It had been returned from Buenos Aires marked "Addressee Unknown," after Velvalee carelessly misaddressed it.

When the San Francisco woman disclaimed any knowledge of the contents, Federal agents stepped into the case. A significant phrase, "Siamese Temple Dancer," finally was decoded to mean "aircraft carrier warship," and referred to Navy sailings out of San Diego. It was subsequently concluded that "doll" itself was used for any warship.

Mrs. Dickinson's own spitefulness caused her discovery and arrest. A second returned letter and then a third found their way into the hands of the censor and then to FBI laboratories. The return address on the last letter was that of a woman with whom Mrs. Dickinson had once quarreled—over some dolls. The woman whose name was maliciously used told the agents that she could think of no one who would have done such a thing other than Mrs. Dickinson.

The colorful if traitorous "doll spy" as she came to be known, was arrested in New York. Her defense, that she was carrying on the espionage work of her late husband, failed to melt the judge's heart who sentenced her to ten years' imprisonment after a tongue-lashing on betrayal of one's country.¹

¹ She was released from the Women's Reformatory, Alderson, West Virginia, in April 1951. Since her periodical reporting under the probation laws was completed three years later, nothing has been heard of her.

Biddle rounded out his campaign against rot by causing ninety-five "vermin" newspapers, organs of anti-Semitic, anti-Negro, and other race-hatred groups, to cease publication. A ninety-sixth, Father Coughlin's *Social Justice*, stopped publication voluntarily after the Attorney General branded it "seditious." The demagogic reign from the Shrine of the Little Flower at Royal Oak, Michigan, thus ended. Its demise was brought about not through legal machinery but by a firm word from the radio priest's superior, Archbishop Francis Mooney of Detroit, a good friend of Roosevelt's.

The Government also had to combat dissent on the industrial front. When continuing labor disputes culminated in the seizure by the United States of Montgomery Ward in April 1944, Board Chairman Sewell Avery refused to relinquish the company helm. The seventy-one-year-old industrialist was a director of a number of giant corporations, including U. S. Steel and had never hidden his animosity toward Franklin Roosevelt.

Now Avery went out of his way to precipitate a showdown between his personal and corporate power and that of the President of the United States.

Late on the evening of April twenty-sixth, Attorney General Biddle was ordered to fly to Chicago and take control of Montgomery Ward by force if necessary. At ten o'clock the next morning Biddle, accompanied by half a dozen helmeted soldiers, arrived in the board chairman's office.

Sewell Avery, as the Attorney General was to recall, "seemed to be pretty mad when we told him he had to go. He looked at me and snapped, "You New Dealer!" To Avery this was obviously the vilest epithet he could hurl at a human being. Then he accused the government of "interfering."

When Biddle rejoined, "we are *not* interfering, we are being interfered with," the mail-order house's chief executive balked with yet more defiance. "I am the boss. I will not move from this chair," he snapped. ". . . to hell with the Government!"

Biddle was "deeply shocked." He turned to the troops, who seemed rather taken aback themselves, and ordered, "Take him out!"

And so the soldiers picked up Sewell Avery still seated in his

chair and carried him out of his office into history. The lone photographer waiting on West Chicago Avenue that cool, early spring morning captured a unique moment of vanishing, unsavory Americana. After Avery was deposited by the soldiers before a "No Parking" sign, as Biddle was to note, the industrialist "bowed to the crowd, smiled frostily" and stepped into his waiting limousine.

Poles apart politically from Sewell Avery, but no less irascible and of more persistent vexation to the government was John L. Lewis. The face of this bushy-browed, scowling son of a Welsh miner became all but synonymous with strikes. He led his United Mine Workers union out on strike in defiance of the mine owners, of the steel industry, which was the major user of coal, and of the Federal Government. Even before the war began, he had incurred the everlasting enmity of Franklin Roosevelt when a mounting series of annoyances—as measured by the Chief Executive—culminated in Lewis calling a strike, only days before the Pearl Harbor attack.

In early 1943 "unofficial" walkouts of the majority of the Pennsylvania miners compelled the President, as Commander in Chief, to order all miners to "return at once to their jobs of producing vitally needed coal for their country." By June half a million of the nation's coal miners were out of the shafts, dissatisfied with the new contracts offered them. Even Harry Bridges, the fiery, left-wing longshoremen's union president joined the stone throwers. He denounced Lewis as a "traitor" and "agent of the fascist powers."

Lewis held his ground in spite of repeated Presidential orders and entreaties, interspersed with threats to induct the miners into the Army. Damned as a Benedict Arnold, he fought back, alluding to the "countless" other strikes disrupting war production, which he branded "shocking in their essential triviality." Belligerently he placed the blame at the White House's door, charging that "Roosevelt kicked every coal miner in the face."

The Government had to seize the coal mines, just as it had Montgomery Ward. They were put under the control of Secretary of the Interior Ickes who ultimately worked out a wage in-

crease with Lewis of approximately \$12.00 a week over the prevailing \$45.50. It was not much by other unions' standards.

Management's record of obduracy and greed was as "shocking" as Lewis had said. There was featherbedding and pyramiding in virtually all large industries. The unconscionable grew fat at the taxpayer's expense. In the name of the war effort, waste, acquisitiveness, and indolence flourished as barnacles on the keel of a long-moored ship.

From the start of the war until V-J Day, strikes, especially unsanctioned wildcat strikes, became consuming weed patches. Employees stayed off the job for varied reasons, not invariably plausible: wages, hours, and overtime, shifts (day, evening, or on "graveyard"), because they did *not* like a supervisor, or *did* like a fellow employee who had been dismissed, or even because the man or woman working nearby was Asian (as on the West Coast) or Negro (as in Philadelphia and Detroit, among other places).

In March 1942 both William Green, president of the AFL, and Philip Murray, his counterpart in the CIO, had gone before the House Naval Affairs Committee to promise "no strikes." "I say to you," Green announced eloquently, "that I publicly disavow strikes of any kind by an AF of L union for the duration!" And Murray had seconded, "For the first time in the history of our government labor has voluntarily yielded its right to strike."

Management had already promised Roosevelt, prior to the establishment of the War Labor Board, that there would be no lockouts, and, like labor's representatives, agreed to mediation and arbitration of all disputes. The wrangle over the closed shop, however, which remained as unsettled as before, was tabled until the end of the war.

But how could Green or Murray or individual heads of great corporations promise a moratorium in labor disputes with so many unions, so many laborers, and so many individual and local problems and ramifications? A no-strike pledge was unrealistic in its very essence, wholly impossible of execution no matter how sincere those who promised.

The automobile and aircraft industries won the unenviable

distinction of being those most likely to strike. Willow Run happened to be half on strike at the time of the sanguinary Detroit riots. That city earned its reputation as the "strike capital of the world," but its workers were far from alone.

By late December 1943 it appeared so inevitable that the nation's railroads were going to shut down that President Roosevelt ordered their nationalization. Management had reached an impasse with fifteen nonoperating unions, representing more than one million employees.

An agreement was attained in three weeks, providing for a nine cents an hour pay increase plus vacations. The roads were managed during this brief period by their own executives, who had been given temporary commissions in the Army and were thus theoretically under the command of Secretary of War Stimson. The officers quickly shed their newly issued uniforms and were civilians again in name and in fact once agreement was reached.

Strikes in the plants of railroad suppliers, however, continued to crop up. The Birmingham plant of the Pullman-Standard Company and the Berwyck, Pennsylvania, shops of the American Car and Foundry Corporation were but two such examples. Southwest truckers accomplished what their railroad competitors had been planning before the Government stepped in. They turned the keys in thousands of ignitions and refused to unlock them until their demands were met. Freight piled up mountainously in Atlanta after a transfer company disgustedly went out of business. It felt that it could not break the long deadlock in negotiations.

Sawmills in the Northwest shut down because the lumberjacks had shinnied down the trees and would not go aloft again until wages soared in the same skyward direction. The workers in the Akron rubber and Boston leather industries were infected by the strike epidemic. The steel workers also struck, not in concert, but piecemeal on a mill-by-mill basis.

Telephone operators in many cities decided they would not complete calls until they obtained more pay, and if possible,

shorter hours. Radio also was sideswiped in the national running battle between employers and unions. Stations in the Midwest sang the blues while the musicians' union picketed their front doors and their transmitters.

Vice-President Wallace muddied the waters further when he urged labor, with all the diplomacy of a Sherman tank, to battle "reactionary" employers. He accused management, which he apparently envisioned as a small army of Sewell Averys, of waging "sit-down strikes against progress."

But the Federal pendulum swung both ways. Labor was incensed occasionally by the arrest of union leaders by the Department of Justice for allegedly encouraging slowdowns or flaunting no-strike pledges.

Men in uniform had a difficult time understanding labor's strikes on the home front. In 1944 the crew of the carrier USS *Coos Bay* collected "pennies for strikers." Then, with a bitter note, the Navy men mailed the proceeds—exactly \$412—to the strikebound Lockland, Ohio, plant of Wright Aeronautical.

To keep some unions happy, Government subcontractors were compelled to hire lavish numbers of workers and workers' apprentices for the most fundamental of jobs. (The author still pales at the memory of the shipyard workers who swarmed over his Liberty freighters whenever they docked in an American port; they would set up bars for liquor in momentarily empty cabins; one man to screw in a new light bulb, another to watch, so many painters "working" in a single fo'c'sle that they were literally slopping paint over one another, inexperienced welders flaring their torches into ammunition lockers or gasoline pipes . . . boasting without shame or restraint that they hoped, "Th' goddamned war will last forever!")

By the late summer of 1945, strikes, walkouts, sit-downs, and lockouts were averaging close to seven hundred a month and idling approximately one million workers. Since December 7, 1941, through V-J Day, the appalling total of 36,333,333 man days had been irretrievably lost—squandered at a time of crucial national need. Looking at it another way, the waste was as if

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nearly twenty-seven thousand workers were absent from their jobs on any given day during the conflict. It was hardly a statistic in which anyone could take pride.

In keeping with the general disorder, accidents soared both in industry and in the home. According to the Department of Labor, there were nearly 7,000,000 casualties in industry during the war. In the two-year period after Pearl Harbor, 37,600 persons were killed "on the job," or 7,500 more than those who died in military service during the same number of months. Fatalities averaged about 17,000 a year throughout the war.

Approximately 250,000 workers, male and female, with the former predominating, were disabled for life through accidents on the job; 4,500,000 were temporarily disabled. It was a record of personal carelessness and lax group supervision which had been augured appropriately by the burning of the *Normandie*.

On the other hand, there was nothing new in individual behavior, corporate or union. The Averys had always been and acted like Averys. Lewis had fought for his coal miners for years prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor. Walkouts and lockouts had been scars across the face of American production for decades. Race had clashed with race since history started.

The drama and the press of war only accentuated stridently what already existed. If there suddenly seemed much to deplore and more, if possible, to rectify, this had always been so.

Government officials were intimately aware of all these facets even if they were not necessarily able to control or ever "categorize" them in traditional bureaucratic fashion. The WPB, however, turned to an authority on industrial and human relations, Thomas North Whitehead of the Harvard Graduate School of Business Administration. The professor, son of the British philosopher Alfred North Whitehead, was asked to tour the nation and find out how Americans were reacting to the war. He reported, early in 1943, to the WPB:

"My most vivid impression of the wide divergence between a certain lack of public confidence within each district or city, as contrasted with the high standard of individual responsibility

shown by most of the people composing these communities. . . .

"I found very few people whose thinking was not profoundly affected by the war. The universality of the anxieties . . . is itself evidence of this. From Colorado to Maine the war *has* come home to the 'man on the street,' in the sense that he believes the times to be critical for his nation and for his way of life and he sincerely wishes his own conduct, and that of his fellow citizens, to measure up to the occasion . . . the good temper and common sense of most people under restrictions and vexations was really impressive. . . .

"I particularly noticed the substantial number of men and women who were good-naturedly undertaking some seemingly useless unpaid duty or submitting to what appeared to them to be an unnecessary restriction from a desire to maintain a spirit of cooperation."

Dr. Whitehead was impressed by the meticulous observance of dimout by the farmers of Gray, Maine, an agricultural inland area, even though shipyards to the east stabbed the coastal darkness nightly with "many hundred thousand candlepower." He summed up: "My own observation is that most people are behaving like patriotic, loyal citizens and that, almost without exception, they all wish to do so [but] . . . it is a matter of common knowledge that the war effort is being impeded to some extent by strikes, high labor turnover, slow work, hoarding, black market practices, luxury buying and similar types of behavior.

"But the capacity of most people to rise above their local circumstances and public opinion is always limited; and when I have personally witnessed indifferent or poor behavior it has usually seemed to me that the people involved were placed in circumstances which, in their thinking, did not make sense or at least did not correspond with the demands being made of them."

The professor, in this hitherto unpublished report, felt that "the intentions or attitudes" of Americans were "above all doubt or question." For the coming months of the war, he suggested that "more visible authority be given to local government organizations," to the end that communities would not feel that their

own destinies and the outcome of the war were wholly and arbitrarily directed by an amorphous, remote, and semicredible colossus in Washington.

And so, for better or worse, with spectacular achievement leavened by a measure of disruption and failure, the ponderous and often fantastic war effort ground ahead on the home front.

CHAPTER 9

The Entertainers

NEVER BEFORE had the world of greasepaint been dedicated on such a wholesale or enthusiastic basis to the fighting man—even to following him almost into his foxhole—and never before had so many actors and actresses, whether in uniform or entertaining, become casualties as in World War II.

They not only kept supplying the ammunition of morale, but they conveyed by their very presence the feeling of home with all of its warmth and nostalgia.

This moving of the substance of the home front overseas, as it were, knew no precedent. Nearly a century earlier Union troops were served exceedingly somber diversion during the tedium of the Civil War—largely ladled out in basso profundo by a swarm of evangelists and other preachers who doggedly followed the armies. They harangued the troops as long as they could find even a token audience.

Wartime entertainment was improved considerably by 1917. The petite singer Elsie Janis brought pleasure and a fleeting memory of Main Street to the AEF cantonments in France. Gracie Fields performed the same role for British Tommies. Sir Harry Lauder burr'd his way through Scotch ballads yet closer to the front line. Douglas Fairbanks, Mary Pickford, Mary Boland, Mary Miles Minter, Charlie Chaplin, and other Hollywood actors and actresses, along with the composers Irving Berlin and George M. Cohan, toured American metropolis and whistle stop

alike to put Liberty Loan drives "over the top." Cohan's "Over There!" became inseparably identified with World War I.

Mass amusement for soldiers was born in that global conflict, sparked by a Commission on Training Camp Activities which went to work in 1917. Song leaders sloshed through the mud of sprawling overnight camps such as "Yip-Yip" Yaphank, New York; Devens, Massachusetts; Dix, in New Jersey; and Sherman, Ohio, to encourage group singing. Bands were informally slapped together on the rookies' mere admission that they could play an instrument. Some "bands" mushroomed into four hundred and five hundred pieces—drowning out with their awesome volume and discord not only the chorus of voices but all adjacent sounds, including gunfire on the rifle and artillery ranges.

Overseas the story was somewhat different. Although bellowing "Mademoiselle from Armentières" from sidewalk cafés might be entirely *de rigueur* in Paris or Bordeaux, it was quite another matter on the Western Front, where the enemy was listening with devastating acuity for the least sound across No Man's Land. However, General "Black Jack" Pershing, whose own musical taste was limited to the band marches and bugle calls standard to old cavalymen, conceded that subdued singing in small groups might be the prescription for homesick members of the AEF. This was permitted in replacement centers along eastern and southern France, including the Lorraine front, and even in the secondary or reserve system of trenches, dugouts, and farmhouse billets close to the front.

The haphazard fife-and-drum corps of 1776 and the make-do bands of the Civil War had become relics of history by 1919 when the War Department, with its penchant for "formalizing" and "implementing," reduced the whole affair to a circular numbered specifically 48-L.

This military Magna Carta for morale read: "Both instrumental and vocal music should contribute substantially to the enjoyment of the soldiers. Properly used, it can serve as a most effective stimulus to enthusiastic, patriotic service. Every post, camp, and station should have a first-class band and in addition

orchestras, glee clubs, and quartets. There should be a definite provision for mass singing under competent leadership, concerts, and various forms of musical entertainment. Singing on marches and in leisure-time groups will be encouraged."

During the 1920's, the problem of entertaining the troops faded. Disarmament became as fevered an addiction as "preparedness parades" had once been. The Army shrank to a size even less formidable than that of the police force of greater New York City. The Navy, albeit protesting, scrapped many of its capital ships. During the four-year Administration of Herbert Hoover, a Quaker and pacifist, matters of defense received even lower priorities.

By the late thirties, however, the nation slowly began to rearm, and the rejuvenating military services again needed diversion. A few months before Pearl Harbor, the Army and Navy, while remaining as far apart as ever on coordinating plans and operations, proved they could harmonize when it came to fun.

A music committee of a Joint Army and Navy Committee on Welfare and Recreation joined hands with civilian groups to provide assistance in procuring entertainment for America's awakening service camps and centers. This was the germ of the Army's Special Services.

At about the same time another medium of soldier entertainment was born: the United Service Organizations. It grew out of an initial meeting between Paul V. McNutt, then head of the Federal Security Agency, his top military leaders, and President Roosevelt.

"I want these private organizations to handle the onleave recreation of the men in the armed forces," Roosevelt explained. "The Government should put up the buildings and some common name should appear outside, but the names of the agencies must not appear on the outside of the buildings."

The founding groups included the Young Men's Christian Association, the National Catholic Community Service, the National Jewish Welfare Board, the Young Women's Christian Association, and the Salvation Army. The American Red Cross,

not a participant, chose to continue to provide independently its own brand of service to the troops.

USO operations zoomed in the United States until soon more than three thousand clubs were throbbing as heavy-footed soldiers and sailors went through the Lindy Hop, Big Apple, Jitterbug, and the Swing. These tribal-like gyrations were introduced speedily to nearly a hundred USO clubs in thirty-five foreign countries, where they competed with such native contributions as the Lambeth Walk and the Hokey-Pokey.

The first production of the traveling shows "hit the road" before Pearl Harbor: a full-length revue by Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy. The comedians took their cast of sixty-five, including singer Benay Venuta, to Army and Navy outposts still being hammered together in the Caribbean.

To the corpulent "Babe" Hardy, every plane trip was a personal purgatory above and beyond the call of duty. Not only did he have a mortal fear of flying, he could not fit his amplitude into the confines of an airplane seat. Standing up during the war, he covered literally thousands of airborne miles.

The pair's popularity with the Government was dimmed somewhat upon their return when they filmed *The Air Raid Wardens*. The OCD had become too thin-skinned to guffaw at its own lampooning.

USO's sturdy production supervisor, Bert Wishnew, already experienced in show business, sent an almost endless stream of performers overseas following the Laurel and Hardy tour. Surely no one possessed heart so cold as to "say no to the USO."

The stars volunteered their services while the armed forces were happy enough to supply transportation, lodging, and food. And there was no dearth of talent. An organization known as the Hollywood Victory Committee—the principal wartime bureau for state entertainment—recruited nearly four thousand players for almost fifty thousand appearances at home and far away.

Among those who rode the overseas circuit were such headliners as singers Bing Crosby and Frank Sinatra, dancers Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers, actors Humphrey Bogart and Jimmy Cagney. Joan Crawford, Linda Darnell, Marlene Dietrich, Jinx

Falkenberg, and Rita Hayworth also helped keep the boys' minds off the war. Aging Al Jolson traveled the world over, as did Errol Flynn, Spencer Tracy, and the man who immortalized Frankenstein, Boris Karloff. Keenan Wynn tore up a season's personal production plans to volunteer, and suave Adolphe Menjou spent a solid six months in the camps and foxholes of North Africa.

They swung into their acts, arranged by themselves, under atrocious theatrical conditions: stages might be in jungle clearings, where acoustics were nonexistent and lighting was poor, or on the tail gates of trucks or slightly built-up jeeps.

Show people turned up in the most unlikely places. The front-trotting Bob Hope, for example, took his comedian assistant, Jerry Colonna, and a pretty brunette singer, Frances Langford, even to the Army's Aleutian outpost on Unimak Island. Travels such as this inspired the sentry quip, "Don't shoot. It might be Bob Hope!"

When Hope returned from this junket, he received a letter from the Army commander: "You may tell Miss Langford that she was the first white woman to set foot on Unimak Island and that my men now call her Virginia Dare Langford."

Ann Sheridan completed, with disarming facility and agility, a sixty-thousand-mile tour of the China-Burma-India theater. Interviewed upon her return, the "oomph" girl told about the difficulties of keeping glamorous on that rugged, remote front line. She wore, she reported, "little summer dresses, midriff style . . . but nothing stays crisp and clean in that climate. Our clothes mildewed and fell apart."

Although glamour may have been ephemeral in the CBI circuit, it was more enduring in the continental United States. Ann Sheridan's worshipers manifested every conceivable excess. Women filed divorce actions, citing her as correspondent, even though their husbands had never enjoyed anything more carnal than a pinup acquaintanceship. Of those who tried to establish a closer liaison the most ingenious was the swain who dashed through a crowd to handcuff himself to her, then swallowed the key.

Paulette Goddard, every bit as sexy in her own lithe fashion, followed Miss Sheridan over the same primitive Asian circuit. Like her fellow actress, she poked into remote, lofty frontiers of the world never before visited by white women. Pilots, who called this former protégée of Charlie Chaplin "Madame Cheesecake," drew lots for the honor of flying her "over the Hump." One of the aviators who lost crashed during his next flight, on which she otherwise would have embarked. "Dead-end kid," purred General "Vinegar Joe" Stilwell, "because she rode to the end of our line."

Miss Goddard, experiencing the same deterrents to glamour as her predecessor, Ann Sheridan, told of how she washed her underwear in steel helmets, using weak tea as the most suitable and sterile liquid.

The Broadway star Gertrude Lawrence completing a tour of the South Pacific, a journey of some twenty-five thousand miles, returned home to remark with undiminished wonder on the rain "which comes down sideways." The English actress had entertained the Tommies of World War I.

What she did not accomplish by personal tours, Betty Grable more than compensated for in the worldwide distribution of her famous pinup picture. Foe seized upon them as well as friend. In 1943, she was voted (by *Motion Picture Herald*) the leading box-office star, displacing Abbott and Costello. The same year she caused global sighs of frustration by marrying the bandleader, Harry James and inspiring the parody: "I want a girl, just like the girl who married Harry James. . . !"

Lanny Ross, former "Camel Caravan" leader on radio, took his show of entertainers to New Guinea and Guadalcanal. He reported upon his return that the troops in that Southwest Pacific zone were especially warm toward Negro musicians and to hymn singing.

At home, screen entertainment was more diverse than ever. Subject matter was scattered all the way from *Gorilla Man* and *Eagle Squadron* to such musicals as *The Road to Morocco*, *Broadway Rhythm*, and *Girl Crazy*.

The "hiss-and-boo" pictures slunk out from under their stones

where they had been gathering slime since 1918, led perhaps by *Hitler, Beast of Berlin*. There had been one similarly entitled during World War I, only the name of the beast being changed to put the Kaiser in star billing. Others included "Hitler's Gang," "Hitler's Children," "Diary of a Nazi," "Hangmen Also Die," and a Walt Disney tour de force, "Der Fuehrer's Face," with a ditty that became almost as popular as "Roll Out the Barrel" and "Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition."

Some camp shows proved inappropriate for their audiences. Katharine Cornell's heavy, pensive *The Barretts of Wimpole Street* was perhaps the worst advised. The dramatic star herself overheard this comment after a London performance while two baffled GI's trudged back through the blackout: "Well, I guess it was better than going to a whore house, anyhow."

Despite the notorious bad language of the G.I.'s, show directors found that the servicemen were rather prudish as to mass entertainment. Off-color jokes or even slightly "dirty" acts did not go over. The stage humor which scored immensely was typified by the following story which Bing Crosby repeated all over the European theater of operations.

It concerned a second lieutenant who nervously asked a sentry, "Did General Eisenhower arrive yet?" and was told, "No, sir."

Ten minutes later, the worried shavetail again asked the same question, and the sentry again repeated, "No, sir."

This exchange continued for almost an hour. When the supreme commander finally alighted from his car, he was eagerly questioned by the sentry, "Are you General Eisenhower, sir?"

To which the amiable Ike replied, "I am."

Then, mopping his brow, the sentry observed: "Boy, are you going to catch hell, sir. There's a second lieutenant here been looking for you for hours!"

Many of the stars put on uniforms for the duration. Among the more than four thousand associated with the motion-picture industry who went on active duty were the cowboy star Gene Autry; Richard Barthelmess of silent picture fame; Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., who started in Navy public relations and ended

up in derring-do against the German Navy off the coast of Corsica (appropriately enough since his last picture was *The Corsican*); Clark Gable, who flew several missions over Germany as an Air Force cameraman, a challenge for a man nearly forty; and Raymond Massey who was invalided out of the Canadian Army after serving eight months as a major. He had been wounded in World War I with the Royal Canadian Artillery. Burgess Meredith and Gene Raymond were commissioned as captains and Jimmy Stewart as a major in the Air Force, while Jackie Coogan, as a glider pilot, landed the first load of glider troops behind enemy lines in Burma.

Heroes from the world of sports were also in demand. The USO often received such requests from the Army as, "Send six name ball players for a cold climate!" The destination in this case was Alaska, where temperatures did not pamper pitching arms.

Dozens of ball players and coaches toured the camps in the United States and overseas, among them disputatious Leo Durocher (ruled 4-F by the draft board), Fred Fitzsimmons, Frankie Fritsch, Harry Heilman, Carl Hubbell, Dutch Leonard, Whitey Lewis, slugger Stan Musial, Joe Medwick, Steve O'Neill, Mel Ott, and Al Schacht. In uniform were ball-diamond faces familiar to any boy who had ever matched flip cards: Mickey Cochrane, Bob Feller, Hank Greenberg, Mickey Harris, Joe Di Maggio, Phil Rizzuto, "Red" Ruffing, Dan Topping, Ted Williams—enough talent to win any number of pennants.

Football's Tommy Harmon, an all-American halfback at the University of Michigan in 1939-40, led a charmed career with the Air Force. In April of 1943 he survived a treetop parachute jump into the jungles of Dutch Guiana and nearly a week of wandering through headhunter country. Later that same year his P-38 was winged after he had shot down two Zeroes over China. This time Harmon was fugitive for thirty-two days before Chinese guerrillas rescued him.

Pugilists were heavily represented. Ring champions, including Joe Louis and Billy Conn, occasionally doffed Army attire to give exhibitions. Barney Ross, as a Marine corporal, killed

twenty-two Japs on a single night at Guadalcanal. When his rifle clicked empty he hurled hand grenades, the only American survivor of a Marine detachment.

The price for entertainment, whether the performers were in or out of uniform, could be high. The grim precedent was set on the first day of the war when the entire band of the U.S.S. *Arizona* perished during the attack on Pearl Harbor.

The USO listed a total of thirty-seven performers who died overseas from air crashes, vehicle accidents, drowning, and even from one fatal case of pneumonia (on shipboard).

A little more than a year after our entry into the war, on February 22, 1943, the world lost the little Russian-born singer who had become identified with "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes" and "Love for Sale." Tamara (Swann) died along with twenty-two others when a Pan American Clipper, from New York, carrying forty persons, crashed in the Tagus River, Lisbon. Tamara was one of a USO troupe which included Jane Froman. Seriously injured, facing operation after operation, the thirty-two-year-old radio singer later married her rescuer, the plane's first officer, John Curtis Brun.

Also critically hurt in this disaster was the popular accordionist, Gypsy Markoff, who remembers watching in disbelief during what presumably was a routine landing: "Part of the plane's wing pointing and going down, down into darkness like a dark black pool or pit . . . next thing I recall I was under water. . . ."

Not so fortunate was Roy Rognan, of the comedy dance team of Lorraine and Rognan. While his partner-wife survived, the master of the soft-shoe technique and the pratfall was lost, though he was probably the best swimmer on board.

Four months later, one of the distinguished actors of the twentieth century was returning to London after several weeks in Spain and Portugal. Leslie Howard, fifty-year-old star of *The Petrified Forest*, *Of Human Bondage*, and many other dramatic vehicles, had successfully promoted British documentary films before groups of Spanish theater officials, then had delayed his departure three days to attend the Lisbon premiere of his latest, *The First of Few*.

Howard, born Leslie Stainer and wounded in World War I while serving with the Northamptonshire Yeomanry, typified British culture and gentility. Since the outbreak of war, he had been a frequent visitor to American service clubs, troop entertainments, and benefits.

At nine thirty on the morning of June first, he boarded a commercial British DC-3 transport at Lisbon's international airport, accompanied by his business secretary (known in England as a chartered accountant), Alfred Chenhalls. The portly associate of the actor bore a passing resemblance to Winston Churchill who at the time was working his way homeward from a tour of Malta and other Mediterranean bastions.

Minutes later, Lisbon air control intercepted a message from the pilot of Howard's airliner, then over the choppy waters of the Bay of Biscay: "We are being attacked by several enemy planes!"

Then silence. Nothing more was heard or seen of the twin-engined aircraft or its sixteen occupants. The presence of an eleven-year-old girl and her two-year-old sister amongst those who perished underscored the waste of it all.

The assumption persisted that one of the many Nazi agents in Lisbon mistook Chenhalls for the British Prime Minister and flashed the word to Luftwaffe squadrons based in "neutral" Spain. Despite determined postwar efforts to establish this theory, including interviews with German pilots themselves, the motive for the wanton attack on an unarmed passenger plane—a type hitherto respected by all belligerents—has remained a mystery. The aviators could recall only their orders to shoot down the DC-3. Sir Winston himself in postwar reminiscences leaned to the mistaken identity theory.

Mystery also shrouded the death in 1944 of another widely acclaimed entertainer: Major Glenn Miller, thirty-six, who had been commissioned in the Air Force in 1942. After conducting a concert over BBC on December 12, 1944, the popular orchestra leader packed his suitcase for Paris. He would present a Christmas show there, before returning for a similar engagement in London.

On a chill evening, December fifteenth, Major Miller stepped

inside the small cockpit of a single-engined liaison plane at an Air Force base and repair depot near Abbotsripton, west of Cambridge in the Midlands. The pilot, Flight Officer John R.S. Morgan, obtained his "go-ahead!" and lost no time in taking the aircraft, designated as a UC-64A, up off the runway and into winter night. All of Huntingdonshire was cloaked with fog that night, so thick it was a marvel that any plane could be aloft.

Nothing was ever heard of Glenn Miller or the light military plane again. It did not crash in the British Isles or in France; otherwise, wreckage would have been found. The assumption remained that the aircraft fell or was shot down over the English Channel or the North Sea—but no concrete evidence was ever turned up to support this hypothesis.

Another entertainer to die in uniform, whose appeal was to quite another age group, was Lee Berrian Powell, the Lone Ranger of radio and movies. The thirty-five-year-old Powell, a former circus performer, was killed on Tinian in July 1944, after two years of fighting on South Pacific islands as a Marine sergeant.

And the war's greatest mass tragedy involving civilian entertainers occurred when the nine members of a USO "sporting show," all wrestlers, were killed shortly after the liberation of the Philippines when their transport plane slammed into a mountain peak.

Journeying afield was but one of the many ways in which the acting profession contributed to the prosecution of the war. For example, George Murphy (who with Cary Grant missed the ill-fated Pan American Clipper flight to Lisbon by minutes when they were placed on another plane) was one of a number of actors who advised the armed services on training films. This type of visual education was an important factor in reducing the training period of American fighting men to about one third that of German soldiers or sailors. The dancing star, even so, was averaging almost five pictures a year.

Andy Devine, the fat, drawling comedian, whose hobby was skeet shooting, proved an invaluable consultant on films dealing with anti-aircraft gunnery.

At one time or another, most Hollywood, Broadway, or radio celebrities auctioned off something personal to aid the Treasury Department or organizations such as the USO. The items put on the block ranged from parlor bric-a-brac to the lace panties of actresses who, like Clara Bow of an earlier decade, possessed the indefinable quality of "it," or sex appeal.

Cash records were broken when Jack Benny sacrificed his seventy-five dollar imitation Amati violin, "Old Love in Bloom," to a War Bond rally in Gimbel's department store in New York City. It brought a million dollars.

And like so many others, the stars also donated their blood. One noteworthy exception to this—as to many other general rules—was Tallulah Bankhead, who said no to Red Cross volunteers in the most patriotic way imaginable; professing she was, "So damned anemic my blood would kill a good American soldier. I told them that I'd give them quarts of the stuff if they could put it into the right place: into Japanese soldiers. That would be more effective than a tank!"

CHAPTER 10

The Best-Kept Secret

CERTAIN EVENTS of World War II or events related to it in various ways were to be etched with especially deep shading on American memories. After the burning of the *Normandie*, these included the fall of the Philippines, especially the heartbreak and the cruelty of Corregidor and Bataan; the invasion of North Africa, in November 1942; the Cocoanut Grove night club fire in Boston later the same month (claiming nearly five hundred lives); the invasion of Normandy, June 6, 1944; the Battle of the Bulge in December of the same year. However, a bulletin that flashed out of a small Southern community, Warm Springs, Georgia, on an April evening in 1945 provided for many people the deepest personal shock of the war. Although but a single life was involved, the event was an omega in its own right before the war's actual climax.

"ROOSEVELT DEAD!" cried the nation's press in the biggest, blackest headlines. "Second coming" type, the printers called the boldface, multipoint streamers. The only President ever to be elected for four terms had succumbed, from a "massive cerebral hemorrhage" at exactly 3:35 P.M. Thursday, April twelfth, in the "Little White House," at Warm Springs.

The unbelievable, to the minds of the great majority of Americans, had happened.

To supporters and opponents alike, the big man from Hyde Park with patriarchal mien and reassuring smile symbolized the

American Government. An heroic casting of his likeness might not inappropriately have replaced that of Freedom atop the dome of the United States Capitol.

A generation of children had known no other Chief Executive. After thirteen years in office, his tended to be a father's image. That some people considered him evil was just part of the picture of Roosevelt, the severe father. At times it seemed as if some of his Congressional whipping boys had developed masochistic traits.

But obviously the unbeatable candidate was loved, admired, and regarded with awe much more than he was hated, or he would not have been returned again and again to office. Citizens wept at the news of Franklin D. Roosevelt's death.

Pictures reproduced of the President at Yalta in February had revealed a thin, pale, haggard man, immensely weary from the mountainous burdens he had been shouldering. Yet most Americans, Britons and citizens of other allied nations could not imagine having another leader. Illogically enough, in spite of the evidence, all too many felt his leadership would continue forever.

As Senator Henry M. Jackson of Washington told the author in 1965, "Since Roosevelt was crippled, we just got used to him not looking entirely well. We expected him to go on and on. If there were a tremor in his hands, which there had been for quite some time, and if he looked drawn and gaunt, as indeed he did from D-Day on, well, we discounted it. We didn't expect him to appear in the bloom of health, as someone with full physical faculties.

"His mind was clear as a bell, alert, right up to the end as far as I know, and that's what also was deceptive as to the true state of his health."

Only a few of the White House staff members and high-placed visitors were aware during the last months of the President's life how close he was to death. With the possible exceptions of the Normandy invasion plans and the atomic bomb project, the health of the Commander in Chief of the United States was the best-kept secret of the war.

When Roosevelt took the first oath of office, in 1933, he was a

sturdy, relatively youthful appearing man of fifty-two, in spite of the permanent paralysis of his legs from poliomyelitis. Physically he remained so throughout his first term. Toward the end of his second term, he commenced to age. He put on weight; his jowls sagged; he developed deep bags under his eyes; his hair grayed and thinned. He began to snap at correspondents more often than ever before.

In his third term, after the outbreak of war, he lashed out at one correspondent with a fury not directed at the Fourth Estate since General Sherman sought, during the Atlanta campaign, to hang a *New York Herald* reporter. He presented an Iron Cross to John O'Donnell, of the *New York Daily News*.

Roosevelt had never liked the *Daily News* nor its Chicago cousin, the *Tribune*. The feeling was mutual. O'Donnell's story which had triggered this insult and mortification—presenting an enemy medal, even though it ranked in Germany on a level with the Congressional Medal of Honor, the Victoria Cross, and the Croix de Guerre—was inconsequential. It was merely the latest of a long list of irritations to strain Roosevelt's measure of exhausted patience.

In the offending article, O'Donnell—a veteran, able, and respected Washington correspondent of conservative views—had complained of the overbearing censorship he believed to exist in the Australia–New Guinea theater. In frustration, O'Donnell had reported, the newsmen were turning to flutes and piccolos, “Just to keep their fingers nimble for the time when censorship lets them beat the keys of their portable typewriters just to turn out a tell-all story.”

The *New York Daily News* writer, “amazed and bewildered” at the Chief Executive's body blow, asserted his remarks were merely “facetious.” Roosevelt, however, was obviously not amused.

The President, tired and testy, had been plagued by sinus trouble for most of his adult life. The heat and humidity of Washington had done nothing to help. Vice Admiral Ross T. McIntire, the White House physician and chief of the Navy's Bureau of Medicine and Surgery, spent much time puncturing the

sinuses, hoping to bring relief. Courage and stoicism bore Roosevelt through many painful bouts under this minor surgery. But he never seemed entirely free of sinus infection or of recurrent headaches.

Although Roosevelt was not a well man in 1944, he was as determined to run for the Presidency as he had been in 1940. In that year he had confided to Eleanor Roosevelt his grave doubts as to the existence of others qualified for the White House. His stubbornness and feeling of indispensability again came to the forefront. The joy of political combat once more helped Roosevelt forget his exhaustion from piloting a nation through long years of domestic and international turmoil.

Prior to the campaign, as he was to recall in his memoirs, Dr. McIntire wondered whether Roosevelt could "stand up under the strain of four more years." He believed after further reflection that the Chief Executive was "organically sound," and decided therefore that he was up to the challenge.

William Hassett, the Presidential press secretary, was certain, on the other hand, that Roosevelt was far from well. His clothes hung on him. His face was lined and gray. Hassett, in his diary, recalled a conversation in the summer of 1944 with Basil O'Connor, longtime friend and once the law partner of Roosevelt. O'Connor, then chairman of the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis, observed of the President, "There is no help for him."

In August, before the campaign for reelection, Breckinridge Long wrote after visiting the White House, "I was stunned to see him. He must have lost 50-60 pounds and aged years since I saw him close up. It was a shock to me to realize he had spent so much in physical resource."

At the end of an unusually stiff and formal meeting, Long continued, ". . . his face at first was inscrutable. Then, I smiled. He smiled, we shook hands and he said, 'Mr. Long,' nothing else. As far as my recollection goes, it is the only time in my memory he has called me anything but 'Breck.'" Long came away convinced that "there seemed to be a deteriorating of his whole physical condition."

Just before the election, Dr. McIntire examined his patient. On November first, the White House physician issued another of his periodic communiqués. It concluded that although Roosevelt was tired and underweight, his general condition was "good . . . for a man of his age." Declaring that the pulse and blood pressure of the sixty-two-year-old President was "normal," Dr. McIntire reemphasized that Roosevelt was "organically sound."

But this heartening report did not tell the whole story.

In January 1943, unannounced, the President had been driven to the resplendent stone skyscraper, just west of Washington, known as the Navy Medical Center. It was in a class with the Army's nearby Walter Reed Medical Center, the Rockefeller Institute, Johns Hopkins, the Mayo Clinic, and a few other medical centers and research institutes. There the President was given an extremely thorough checkup, on the orders of Dr. McIntire, worried about his patient's sinus, headaches, and recurrent stomach distress.

A young heart specialist, Lieutenant Commander Howard C. Bruenn, of the Navy Medical Corps Reserve, who conducted the examination, came up with a disquieting conclusion.

"The President was suffering from congestive heart failure," Bruenn revealed in an interview in 1965 with the author.

Congestive heart failure, associated primarily with those in their middle or later years, is generally brought on by chronic hypertension or by an actual heart attack. While the pressure usually rises in the pulmonary artery, the congested heart is nonetheless unable to pump enough blood to supply the needs of any part of the body, including the brain.

Very often attendant is arteriosclerosis, or hardening of the arteries, edema, or congestion in the lungs and, conceivably, a swelling in any or several of the limbs of the body, the ankles or wrists, for example. According to doctors at the National Heart Institute, congestive heart failure tends to be a chronic or continuing condition.

One immediate result of the finding was to add Dr. Bruenn as a regular member of the White House medical staff. During the next month, February, and continuing into March, Roosevelt

canceled appointments and at least one speaking engagement.

"Beginning of a head cold," then "intestinal disturbance" were the explanations given to the press. The news media reported the information in one- and two-paragraph stories, invariably buried in back pages with the truss ads and the benefit-supper announcements.

In October and then in December of 1943, the President had a "cold" which forced cancellation of appointments and engagements. If staff members and friends other than Bill Hassett were concerned, they did not show it. Time and again they averred "the Boss" would "bounce back."

Roosevelt's heart condition persisted. It was relatively unchanged on June 9, 1944, when Dr. McIntire announced that the Chief Executive's health was "excellent in all respects. He is in better physical condition than the average man his age."

The White House physician's statement was manifestly at variance with the facts.

A cardiac notwithstanding, Roosevelt polished off Thomas E. Dewey almost as effortlessly as he had Wendell Willkie. He won 432 electoral votes against his Republican adversary's 99. While the campaign was an unusually quiet one, Roosevelt took the New York governor's occasional thrusts personally. They "got his Dutch up," Hassett observed.

Dewey's patriotism denied him the use of potential dynamite. General George C. Marshall himself had implored the Republican candidate not to mention forewarnings possessed in Washington, late in 1941, of the impending Japanese attack. To do so, asserted the chief of staff, would have revealed our breaking of the Japanese diplomatic code.

"I had heard reports of President Roosevelt's ill health," Dewey has written the author. "They were largely second-hand and I had no direct confirmation. In any event it did not appear to me appropriate for me to discuss the subject as his political opponent."

The President rested but little after his victorious campaign, one which his eldest son James frankly labeled "Father's death warrant." And Walter Lippmann wrote later that Truman was

nominated, "By a convention which was fully aware that it was almost certainly choosing a President of the United States. There was no secret about this during the campaign."

In fact, with true fighter's spirit, Roosevelt had even driven in an open car through a cold rain in the closing hours of the campaign just to show New Yorkers how sturdy he was.

He rested little afterward. He boarded his Executive Pullman for Carver Cottage, his summer home near Pine Mountain, Warm Springs, to continue his custom of sharing Thanksgiving turkey with his "neighbors." Then he made a fast tour of Southern military bases, returning to the White House in mid-December long enough to preside at whirlwind conferences with lawmakers and the Allied chiefs of staff. Next he hurried north for Christmas at Hyde Park.

Roosevelt, still not sparing himself, was "tired and weary," Bill Hassett confided to his diary—"I fear for his health despite assurances from the doctors he is o.k."

"I was distressed to note his [Roosevelt's] appearance," Green Hackworth, a prominent State Department attorney, has informed the author. "This I regarded as a natural result of the strain to which he had been subjected by the war and the attendant international situation. It never occurred to me to consider whether he might or might not continue to serve a fourth term."

On January 20, 1945, Roosevelt took the oath of office on the South Portico of the White House. Senator A.S. Mike Monroney, then a young Representative from Oklahoma, recalls waiting on the south lawn of the White House for the ceremonies. He had heard that Roosevelt was feeling especially badly, causing a delay in the ceremony.

When he did appear, the fourth-term Chief Executive declared in the shortest inaugural address in history, less than six hundred words: "We must live as men, not as ostriches, nor as dogs in the manger."

His hand shook so much that he almost dropped the paper on which his remarks were typed. But no reporters printed this disturbing intelligence.

His feebleness already was apparent from his signature. It had

become an embarrassment to ask him to autograph a portrait. He lit his chain of cigarettes with ever-increasing difficulty but waved away offers of a light.

Reporters who realized what was happening looked the other way. This was not, however, an isolated "conspiracy of silence," according to radio commentator H. R. Baukhage. Rather, he observed, "voluntary censorship" of war news already had resulted in "the greatest conspiracy of silence in the history of journalism." Not reporting news had become a reflexive act by 1945. Besides, many of those who saw the President frequently had no inkling of the true state of his health.

"The men," Baukhage told the author, "who saw the President twice a week at the news conferences or when he was traveling didn't hardly notice the gradual change.

"I recall that I missed a couple of weeks on consecutive out-of-town assignments and when I came back took my favorite stance against the wall far around to the left so that I could watch the President closely for his gestures meant a lot. I noticed a change. But when I spoke to the men who had been seeing him regularly none of them said he looked much worse. It would never have occurred to me to mention it any more than to repeat what I knew wasn't to be repeated after a briefing at G-2. Every President I ever covered, including Kennedy and excluding Coolidge, from Wilson on, aged tremendously in office. In Roosevelt's case we knew the war-time burdens he was carrying and I guess we felt they were somewhat greater than our greatest—the voluntary censorship. Also, regardless of our politics, human decency may have played some role."

Dr. McIntire issued another medical report immediately after the inauguration: "Everything's fine. He went through the campaign in fine shape and right on through the following months. He's had no colds this winter and we all feel good about that. He's carrying a thunder of a lot of work and getting away with it in grand style."

Others felt differently. Merriman Smith, United Press correspondent, and others covering the White House were surprised to observe that the United States Secret Service, shortly after the

fourth inaugural, and apparently on their own initiative, had established a security guard around Vice-President Truman, nearly the size of the President's. Even during the war years, the notion had persisted from a policing standpoint that a Vice-President was not a high priority target for assassins.

There could have been only one reason for the increased guard around Harry Truman. The Secret Service had grave doubts as to the President's life expectancy.

Immediately after the inauguration, Frances Perkins, who had taken no stock in what she labeled the "whispering campaign" about the President's health, belatedly noticed his "thin" face, "gray" pallor, "dull" eyes, all manifesting a "sense of enormous fatigue." The Secretary of Labor thought Roosevelt reacted at his initial cabinet meeting as a fourth-term President as if he were an invalid, who was allowed visitors for the first time and then was worn out by their tarrying much too long. His hand shook so that she was hesitant to grasp it in saying goodbye.

Mrs. Roosevelt herself later wrote that at this time "he was far from well." Even so, the President did not favor himself. He departed within a few days for the Yalta Conference, commencing February third.

James Byrnes, as War Mobilization Director, was in the official party. He was concerned over the President's "general appearance," wondered why Roosevelt allowed his mouth to droop open. Mrs. Anna Boettiger, Roosevelt's only daughter, also accompanying her father on the long, arduous journey, explained his sinuses were acting up again and that he could breathe better through his mouth. This, of course, was long known to be a mannerism of heart sufferers.

While the President was at Yalta, discussing with Stalin the entry of the Soviet Union into the war against Japan, rumors arose out of the Vatican Foreign Secretariat in Rome that Roosevelt was cutting short the meeting and preparing to return to Washington—for reasons of health. The White House "spokesman" quickly countered, "All the information we have and every indication is that President Roosevelt is in excellent health."

Dr. McIntire was unusually sensitive at Yalta over the Presi-

dential appearance. He believed the photographers were no longer "uniformly kind and thoughtful" in posing the President.

"They shot him from every angle and seemed to prefer the pictures that caught him with his mouth open or stooped forward," the physician later wrote.

Lord Moran, Churchill's personal physician, wrote in his memoirs, published in 1966, that when he saw Roosevelt at Yalta, the President appeared so sick that it seemed certain that he had but "a few months" more of life. The same English doctor also recalled receiving a letter from Dr. Roger Lee, of Boston, former president of the American Medical Association, noting that Roosevelt had experienced "heart failure" in midsummer 1944.

Homeward bound on the USS *Quincy*, Roosevelt sat on deck drenched in the Atlantic sunshine for hour after hour. He was gray and thin—tragically reminiscent of Wilson after Versailles. The President, wrote Merriman Smith, one of the three press syndicate correspondents aboard, had "aged ten years in ten days."

The death at sea of Major General Edwin M. ("Pa") Watson, military aide and close friend, further depressed the President. Judge Samuel Rosenman, presidential speech writer and another good friend of Roosevelt's, was certain the momentous conference had sapped a "substantial" part of Roosevelt's "remaining reserves of strength." He had difficulty persuading the Chief Executive to settle down to immediate business, preparing his report to Congress on the disastrous meeting with Stalin.

All who saw Roosevelt upon his return agreed, as Truman put it, that he was "plainly a very sick man." The Missourian experienced "a hollow feeling within me," when he looked at the President.

Eleanor Roosevelt was surprised at her husband's new custom of resting in the middle of the day. She found that he was "less and less willing to see people for any length of time," adding that "it was clearer every day that Franklin was far from well."

Grace Tully, his secretary, noted the "signs of weariness" were etched deeply in the President's thinning face. His "normal zest"

for scanning the mountains of morning mail was completely gone.

When he spoke on Thursday, March first, before a joint session of Congress, the Chief Executive himself hinted for the first time at his mortal weariness. He apologized for being seated while delivering the address, a rare pose for a man who always had made a point of standing before audiences, explaining that he constantly carried "about ten pounds of steel" (his braces) on his legs. He insisted, however, that the fourteen-hundred mile journey had left him "refreshed."

It was apparent to those who watched and listened to the address that the President was far from "refreshed." Attorney General Biddle, who shook hands with him, was "shocked," observing that "he had aged a good deal and his hands were cold."

But the President kept going. He either believed he possessed more reserves of strength than was the case, or hoped there was yet time to cram in his final lines in the vast drama of war. He told his staff he wished to attend the opening of the United Nations in San Francisco, then go to London in response to a long-standing invitation from Churchill. And the President hoped to come home from Britain the long way around, via the Pacific war zone.

Dr. McIntire protested. He reminded the President that he was "run down," underweight, and had been coughing more heavily than normal. What he needed, declared the White House physician, was a "real rest," in Warm Springs.

The Chief Executive seemed amenable. He promised to be a "good patient." However, he could not rest yet. On that timing he was adamant.

March ticked on. Roosevelt labored at his desk unremittingly.

Basil O'Connor, popping in one breakfast time, looked his friend up and down with appraising eye, then warned, "Unless you go away for 90 days and do absolutely nothing there's a good chance you're not going to be around . . . when the war is over." That was when Roosevelt would be most needed, O'Connor added.

On March seventeenth, close friends were invited to a small

White House dinner to celebrate the Roosevelts' wedding anniversary, their fortieth.

A few days later, the President suffered what was described as another intestinal disturbance. Again, it evoked no special public attention. Admitting to no organic ailment at this time, Dr. McIntire would recall that his patient's pulse was "steady," his blood pressure generally normal and as a bonus there was an apparent lack of arteriosclerosis. (After death, however, quite the opposite condition was noted: Roosevelt's arteries were found to be hard and brittle.)

On March twenty-third, the Chief Executive left Washington—for a week in Hyde Park, with its usual social distractions and all too close communications with the Government as well as representatives of the press and radio.

He returned six days later, on March twenty-ninth, to spend only the day in Washington before reboarding his train for Warm Springs. But, characteristically, the Commander in Chief squeezed many appointments into these short hours, starting with "Jimmy" Byrnes who found the President "unusually nervous." The South Carolinian, who was about to resign his War Mobilization post, had brought with him General Lucius Clay, the prospective military governor of Germany.

When Byrnes asked Clay after the meeting why he had been so silent, the general replied he was so "shocked" at the President's appearance that he found himself almost speechless. "A dangerously ill man," was Clay's estimate.

Grace Tully, that last, frantic day in the White House, thought Roosevelt looked so badly that she "almost burst into tears." And especially dramatic was the reaction of Prime Minister Mackenzie King of Canada who was so appalled at the sight of the man before him that "instinctively" he leaned forward and kissed his old friend (as Biddle has recalled to the author).

As the afternoon moved on, Cordell Hull arrived to add his urgings that the President "take more rest." Roosevelt admitted to his Secretary of State that he was not feeling well and added that he was especially troubled by recurrent nausea. He attributed the discomfiture to the old sinus infection.

Hull, unwell himself, came away from this final call with the impression that Roosevelt "looked like death."

Robert Sherwood had to hurry to the Union Station that Thursday evening to say good-bye before the Presidential train rolled south. Deeply upset, Sherwood returned home to tell his wife, "The President . . . in much worse shape than I had ever seen him before . . . he seemed unnaturally quiet and even querulous."

At long last, the President apparently did want rest. He asked Michael F. Reilly, head of the Secret Service detail, to instruct the engineer of his train not to "set any speed records . . . tell him to take it easy."

The next day at the Warm Springs depot, Roosevelt was helped off the car by "Mike" Reilly who knew something was wrong. The President was "heavy . . . absolutely a dead weight." He did not or could not assist himself with his powerful arms and shoulders as he usually did.

However, "the Boss," as he had so many times after illnesses during his long Presidency, appeared to be "snapping back" in the next twelve days. Simply being in Warm Springs had the magically medicinal effect upon F.D.R. that oxygen has for asthma sufferers. He relaxed and joked with his associates in familiar obligato.

He saw visitors including President Osmena of the Philippines and Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau, Jr. Neither had reason to conclude other than that the President of the United States was again on the road to recovery.

On Wednesday afternoon, April eleventh, Roosevelt went riding with Grace Tully and others in the hills around Warm Springs. She remembered that his conversation included "an unusual amount of reminiscing about his earlier life: trips, people, foods that appealed to him."

That evening, the President telephoned Anna Boettiger in Washington to inquire about the health of her five-year-old son Johnny, who had been ill. His grandfather was very pleased to learn that the boy was on the mend.

Anna noted that her father's voice was "strong." He was, as

she had known him most of her life, "full of fun and quips."

Thursday, Dr. Bruenn called Dr. McIntire in Washington to report that their primary patient had gained eight pounds since his arrival. He felt generally fit and was looking forward to attending a barbecue that afternoon. He should, added the heart specialist, be back in the White House in a week to pick up the traces where he had wearily dropped them. Everything looked "good."

The same morning, Hassett found "the Boss" in "good spirits," even though he continued to look badly. He complained of a "light" headache. The press secretary left the President with a batch of letters and documents to sign.

While he was tending to this official business, a Russian-born artist, Madame Elizabeth Shoumatoff, was working on a water-color portrait of him. First she had draped a blue Navy cape over his shoulders.

Presently he looked up and said to Madame Shoumatoff, "We've got just 15 minutes more."

Margaret Suckley, a cousin of the President's, also in the room, was disturbed a few minutes later when he raised his left hand to his head and then let it fall, in a loose motion. She believed perhaps he had dropped his cigarette.

When she stepped to his side to ask him if this had happened, he leaned forward, his eyes closed.

"I have a terrific headache," he told his cousin. Then he slumped over. These were his last words.

No medical skill could bring Franklin Roosevelt back. Suddenly, one of history's most dynamic, influential and controversial Chief Executives had died. Now there would be tears, reflections, some brickbats, as well as a salting of recriminations.

"I shall always," wrote Senator Arthur Vandenberg of Michigan, Republican power in Congress, "feel that Admiral Ross McIntire, his physician, carries a great responsibility for ever having allowed him to run a fourth time."

Vandenberg, however, had struck out at merely one of the factors concerned with the President's demise. The surgeon's optimistic bulletins, which he must have known were false or, at

the very best, misleading, left the public unprepared for the abruptness of Roosevelt's death. But there was also the President's own stubbornness, his preoccupation with destiny, his consuming sense of indispensability, and the willingness of the Democratic party to allow its famous standard bearer to remain in harness.

The Navy's Bureau of Medicine and Surgery has no records of examinations of President Roosevelt or concerning him in any respect. This seems surprising in the light of his examination in January 1943 by Dr. Bruenn. Since Dr. McIntire was also head of the Bureau, the only assumption is that he held the reports himself. There is nothing, however, of this medical nature in the Surgeon General's papers at Hyde Park.

More than a decade after her husband's demise, Mrs. Roosevelt must herself have experienced lingering questions. In 1956 she inquired at the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery about records, according to notations still on file. There was nothing even at that time the Surgeon General was able to give the President's widow.

Long after the patient's death, the clinical privacy of the best-kept secret remained as inviolate as ever.

CHAPTER 11

Day of Judgment

WARS DO END, even though they may seem interminable in their darkest hours.

That fateful spring and summer of 1945, World War II finally burned itself out. In its last flaming gasps, however, the cost in human life was as extravagant as ever, even reaching to the lesser canvas of the home front.

Lakeview, Oregon, a small community ten miles north of the California border, felt a measure of war's sting on Saturday, May fifth, just three days prior to V-E Day. On that date, the Reverend Archie Mitchell, pastor of the Lakeview Christian Church, and his wife Elsie, twenty-six, took five children from their Sunday School on a picnic-fishing party in a wooded area of Lake County known as Salt Springs. Mrs. Mitchell unloaded the car at the recreation spot while the children, ranging in age from eleven to fourteen, spread out cloths, paper plates, sandwich boxes, and thermoses.

One of the youngsters, Joan Patzke, wandering a short distance from the others, stumbled on something she had never seen before. She called out that she had found ". . . a strange white object looking like a balloon!"

Barely forty feet away, still parking his car, the Reverend Mitchell shouted, "Let it alone!" His instant concern stemmed from rumors of strange balloon bombs the Japanese were said to have launched into the prevailing air currents toward the North American continent.

Mitchell had barely stepped from the car when the bomb exploded. Mrs. Mitchell and the five children died instantly from the shattering concussion. Her husband was unscathed.

The newspapers reported obliquely that "an explosion of unannounced cause" had brought the terrible tragedy to five families of Lakeview. Not until a month later, with the end of the war with Japan nearing, did the War Department lift official secrecy on one of the weirdest weapons of the entire war: the Japanese balloon bombs. More than 9,000 of these paraffined rice-paper devices, inflated with hydrogen to thirty-three feet in diameter, were wafted at altitudes of more than thirty-thousand feet across the Pacific. First launched in November 1944, prevailing winds drove them eastward at a rate of nearly 120 miles an hour, for a crossing of from three and a half to four and a half days. Approximately 230 of them were actually found in Alaska, along the Pacific coast from Washington to Mexico, and as far east as Michigan. Fragments of 75 others were identified. Each balloon carried five bombs: four incendiaries and a thirty-three-pound anti-personnel fragmentation (such as killed the picnickers). Their mission was to set fire to forests and cities, and spread terror among the populace. Fortunately, there were no droughts during the winter of 1944-45.

The Air Force sent planes to shoot the balloons down and actually did overtake and destroy a few. A sheriff popped one with tracer bullets from a heavy caliber rifle, while a farmer managed to pry another loose from a barbed-wire fence without exploding it and turned it over to the FBI. Quite a few were seen to burst in the air, while one fell on a power line, disrupting service for several hours. Yet another plopped in a river at twilight and sank in view of a number of startled lovers on the banks.

Local health officers, agricultural experts, and even 4-H Club children were alerted. Decontamination would be necessary should the balloons carry bacteriological bombs to infect cattle and livestock.

In demanding complete secrecy and censorship of all reports of the Japanese balloons, the Armed Forces rationalized that it would be better to risk the loss of some lives than to allow the

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enemy to know that any of the bombs reached their sprawling target area. The policy paid off. General Sueki Kusaba, in charge of the unorthodox aerial assault, admitted after the war that the project was canceled in April 1945, because confirmation was obtained of only one balloon landing on the American continent. Ten per cent hits had been predicted.

"Your balloons are not reaching America," he was told by his superiors. "Americans could not keep their mouths closed this long!"

(Ill luck, however, continued to dog the Reverend Archie Mitchell. Marrying Betty Patzke, the older sister of two of the children lost in the blast, he went to Viet Nam as a missionary to lepers. In 1962 he was captured by Viet Cong raiders and is believed to be still a prisoner.)

A more devastating and dramatic approximation of war's fury was sampled a few weeks later on a foggy Saturday morning in downtown Manhattan—eighty stories above the street. That July twenty-eighth, Stan Lomax, WOR sports announcer, was driving along Fifth Avenue, noting idly that the upper floors of the Empire State Building were wreathed in mist when: "I heard the roar of the plane's engines, looked up and then I knew it would crash. Its course was straight down Fifth Avenue—it struck with a crash like thunder in a nightmare . . . the entire floor where it hit burst into the same golden blinding flame as the plane had done. It was all like a hideous dream. . . ."

An hour previously, a B-25 bomber, with the name "Old John Feather Merchant" emblazoned on its nose, had left Bedford Air Force Base, near Boston, headed for La Guardia Airport. There were but three aboard: the pilot, Lieutenant Colonel William F. Smith, twenty-seven years old, a West Pointer and veteran of a hundred missions over Germany; his copilot; and a Navy machinist's mate hitchhiking home to Brooklyn on emergency leave.

The takeoff was not auspicious. The weather was indifferent in Massachusetts. Aerologists had warned of fog and poor visibility in the New York area. Minutes after "Old John Feather Merchant" became airborne, the Bedford tower began attempting,

unsuccessfully, to reach Smith to deliver an urgent message from his wife, Martha, and bring him back if possible. She and their year-old son, William, Jr., had no way to return home to nearby Watertown. Her husband had absentmindedly pocketed the keys to the family car as he climbed into the B-25's cockpit.

Over La Guardia, the pilot checked in to be told to "hold" briefly, awaiting clearance. Smith next asked the weather conditions at the Newark Airport. He was told the ceiling there was over a thousand feet—higher than at La Guardia.

Colonel Smith then asked for clearance to Newark and obtained it. In unintentional prophecy, the La Guardia tower added as a postscript to the pilot:

" . . . we're unable to see the top of the Empire State Building."

Journey's end for "Old John Feather Merchant," for all aboard the twin-engined bomber, and for ten persons within the world's tallest structure came at exactly 9:43 that misty morning in a holocaust of flaming gasoline and shrapnel-like flying glass, metal, and masonry. All ten of those in the Empire State Building, mostly young women, worked for the National Catholic Welfare Conference. Their office was on the seventy-ninth floor where the bomber had rammed at nearly four miles a minute into the skyscraper's side, punching an eighteen by twenty foot hole. Damage extended upward into unoccupied offices on the eightieth floor, while blazing fuel spilled into the corridors and cascaded down elevator shafts. Molten debris and engine fragments rained down onto thirty-fourth Street, nine hundred feet below.

One man, W. Paul Deering, the conference's publicity director, jumped to his death in preference to the possibility of being burned alive. A twenty-year-old elevator operator, Betty Oliver, rode in her car, the cables severed, seventy-nine stories down—and survived, thanks to emergency brakes which checked the fall. A passing coastguardsman, however, had to dig through a shaft wall in the basement to rescue her from the smashed elevator.

And in Watertown, still without the keys to her car, Mar-

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tha Smith, stunned and disbelieving, told reporters, “. . . he bounced the baby on his lap only last night and said, ‘The youngster recognized me for the first time since I’ve been home. Gee, it makes a man feel big and important to have a son like mine!’ ”

The weird and the tragic vied with the dramatic and historic that fateful summer of 1945. A little more than a week after the crash of the B-25, August sixth became an unforgettable date.

In Washington, early on that Monday morning, Senator Hiram Johnson, archconservative Republican from California, aged seventh-eight, died in the Naval Medical Center. The implacable opponent of the League of Nations had waged a losing battle to scuttle the United Nations as well.

At Lockheed Air Terminal, Burbank, Major Richard Ira (“Dick”) Bong, twenty-four, American ace of all time, died in the take-off explosion of a P-80 jet under test. The victor over forty Japanese aircraft had come home in February to be married and to enjoy a stint of “safer duty.”

Over Hiroshima, Japan, the B-29 “Enola Gay” dropped warfare’s first atomic bomb. . . .

Just three weeks’ previously, on July sixteenth, at 5:30 A.M., a “live” test at the Alamogordo, New Mexico, desert military reservation had proved that man could successfully unleash the destructive powers of nuclear fission. The engineer of a Santa Fe freight train, pounding westward on the far northern fringe of the secret site, had blinked at the dazzling fireball and wondered what in the world could have caused so great a conflagration.

The man-made inferno, “beautiful beyond comparison,” according to another witness, was visible 520 miles away, in Needles, California. Police, sheriffs, and newspaper offices throughout an area of tens of thousands of square miles were besieged with phone calls.

The very few who knew or suspected the source of the blast could not and would not tell until President Harry S. Truman announced that an atomic bomb had obliterated Hiroshima, with eighty thousand of its inhabitants and, in all likelihood, would end World War II. A second atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki, August ninth, with comparable carnage.

Truman was characteristically blunt and unequivocal in his decision to employ the bomb, once perfected. He never entertained "any doubt that it should be used." At the same time he wanted to be certain it was directed against "a military target." Hiroshima as a barracks area and "war production center" was selected after the President conferred with Secretary Stimson, General Marshall, and the commander of the Air Force, General H. H. ("Hap") Arnold.

Suddenly, unbelievably, it was all over. The farthest-reaching, most devastating war the world had known had finished, with an ease and abruptness that were difficult to credit. On August fourteenth, Japanese Emperor Hirohito agreed by proclamation to surrender unconditionally.

"To strive for the common prosperity and happiness of all nations," he declared in an official manifesto of capitulation, "as well as the security of well-being of our subjects in the solemn obligation which has been handed down by our imperial ancestors and which we lay close to. . . ."

As, almost, an afterthought, the "Son of Heaven" mentioned that "A new and most cruel bomb" also had something to do with the obligation.

On August 15, the page-one streamer in the *Detroit Free Press* was typical of how newspapers told the story the nation had been waiting nearly four years to hear, in the largest type:

PEACE PEACE PEACE

Riotous celebrations broke out in many cities that night. San Francisco was by far the most abandoned. Soldiers and sailors, aided by throngs of willing civilians, smashed the windows of liquor stores and pilfered their stock. Two stunning blondes stripped down to their earrings and plunged into a lily pond near the Civic Center. They splashed happily about until police fought through a highly appreciative audience with blankets.

The unrestrained emotions of the Golden Gate City were reminiscent of the fever that gripped London following the Armistice in 1918 when men and women, total strangers to each other, indulged in public lovemaking. The California seaport, in

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the lusty tradition of the gold rush a century before, did not simmer down for three days. Destruction totaling hundreds of thousands of dollars was left in the revelers' wake.

Chicagoans built huge bonfires from signboards, trash heaps, anything inflammable. Times Square was like a huge drunken barroom, as impossible as it was impassable.

Washingtonians stormed the White House fences in enthusiasm not so much for Harry Truman, little known as a man, as a senator, or as a President, but because the Chief Executive symbolized the ending of the war. Only the formalities of surrender would wait for September second and the signing aboard the battleship *Missouri* in Tokyo Bay.

The "boys" did not have to await these legalities. They had commenced already their homeward trek from "over there." Throughout the United States, wherever there was a seaport or military airfield, there were scenes of mingled joy and heartbreak as transports, as well as men-of-war, and aircraft landed. Families embraced in uncontrolled weeping at dockside. But there were also the widows at great naval bases, such as Norfolk and San Diego, who were waiting in silence for the chance to ask a shipmate how their husbands had died.

Men stepping at last onto American soil felt they were living a dream. Reality, in the curious capacity of the human being to adapt, had become foxholes and island beaches, the steady basso of artillery barrage, or the long vigil at the guns of a warship. Now these pungent, acutely familiar associations of daily life were gone—evaporated like yesterday's morning dew. It seemed unbelievable.

Once again their lives would be punctuated by the old humdrum: the smell of morning coffee on the kitchen stove, the cry of a child turning in bed, the whir of a lawnmower, the chirp of sparrows, the late-at-night spit and yowl of a cat fight, the spectacle of queues of commuters at the corner bus stop, and then the awareness in late afternoon's traffic push that another work day in the city was coming to an end.

The servicemen had mused on these homilies for long months,

possibly years. Now that they were to be attained the prospect was strangely anticlimactic.

There was sometimes shocking disillusion in the homecomings. One veteran, walking out of a separation center in his new, poorly fitting "civvies," remarked wistfully, "I guess I'll have to sleep in a hotel when I get out. My wife couldn't wait for me. She's getting a divorce."

He was not alone. There were 502,000 divorces in 1945, or 31 for every 100 marriages. The rate was up 25 per cent over 1944, itself a boom year for divorce. With marriages increased in the same comparative period by only 11 per cent, the nation which still boasted the loftiest standard of living possessed another superlative: the highest divorce rate in the world.

It would have been scant consolation to returning veterans like the one compelled to sleep in a hotel (providing he could obtain a room) to know that the previous generation's war had had a similar disrupting effect. Divorces in 1918 rose 40 per cent above the 1917 rate, the spiral continuing until 1920.

Returning home along with servicemen and factory hands were the niseis. Already their neighbors were pondering the passions of wartime. What madness had prompted them to join the cry for banishing these Japanese-American families?

Actual aliens and prisoners of war were released week by week. Many Germans and Italians fought deportation to their devastated homelands. One of the multitude, Kurt Peters, a German merchant-marine radio operator, remained in Bismarck, North Dakota, after the gates of Fort Lincoln were opened. He went to work on the *Bismarck Tribune*, fell in love with the office receptionist, married her, and became the father of three children.

Naturalized as a citizen, he joined the United States Navy. Active in young peoples' groups of the Bismarck Presbyterian Church, Peters later became circulation manager of the paper before joining the Montana-Dakota Utilities Company to continue religious work, lecturing, and traveling.

The autumn of 1945 turned into winter. That there had been

such a war and that it was all over seemed equally incomprehensible. The home front could not be forgotten, not by a snap of a finger or by merely willing it so. The home front would persist as long as there was anguish in the hearts of human beings.

Out of the hundreds of thousands with an indelible ache there was, for example, Mrs. Belle Ellzey, of Texas, whose son Lieutenant John G. Ellzey, Texas A. and M. graduate and a pre-ministry student, was killed in France. He fell a few days after posting his last letter to "Dear Mom," concluding "I pray you are o.k."

In privately publishing his letters to her, Belle Ellzey added the sort of postscript which tens of thousands of other American mothers could have written, of her generation and earlier ones:

I am so very homesick for him. It is Christmas—and the photo of his little white cross came as a message from him in my mailbox with many Christmas greetings from my friends I have missed his dear letters—letters so full of patriotism and courage and sacrifice, helping me to be brave while he faced the dangers I cannot write to him, putting my tears into words, for my eyes stay strangely dry.

Postscript

THE FIGHTING MAN came home to an America whose outward appearance had not changed a great deal. Huge new factories, of course, and waterfront structures, such as shipyards, had risen here and there. Sprawling cities of wood, to train the fighting men, and yet more sprawling aviation fields blotched what lately had been meadows or plains.

The war bond, "Back the attack," scrap-drive, and food-conservation posters were still tacked against street posts and poles, and pasted against walls. But they were faded, peeling, and no passerby accorded them so much as an idle glance.

The home of this newest veteran of America's procession of wars looked somewhat shabby. It needed paint. The furniture needed new covering. The appliances which helped cook his breakfast and wash his clothes were still there. But they did not work nearly so well as he remembered. His automobile functioned even more disappointingly, and its tires were as smooth as glass.

The thoughts of Americans, grasping at the old peacetime patterns in the late autumn of 1945, were dominated by separation centers and a yearning for normalcy. Employment concerns could be compromised only so long as the individual's wartime savings held out. The four-year boom was abruptly ended. Factory gates were banging shut all over the land. The golden tinkle of the paymaster's cash register was stilled.

In just two weeks following Japan's surrender, two million workers were released from their jobs. Many left protesting, especially the employees of Andrew Higgins' shipyard in New Orleans who could not understand why the Government no longer wanted invasion barges. Higgins' plant was picketed until the owner shut down entirely.

The steady hand of reconversion was yet to be felt. Misguided efforts in that very direction in the spring of 1945 had been disruptingly premature. Plants had to be reconverted to catch up with unsatisfied military needs for mines, rockets, ammunition, and armor plate.

Unemployment compensation claims spiraled half a million at a time. However, the checks the workers received for these claims, added to their wartime earnings, were to spark a consumers' spending spree of unprecedented volume and persistence.

These consumers were probably too busy to contemplate how long it will be before World War II can be stamped "paid in full." The thought, however, is a sobering one.

The Veterans Administration, for example, is now paying compensation or pensions to nearly 3,500,000 of the nation's veterans, some of whom go back to the Indian wars. Also on the organization's payroll are 1,293,000 surviving dependents, including children, widows, and parents whose need stems all the way back to the Civil War (specifically 1,393 widows and 556 dependent children)

On the basis of this experience, Federal disbursing officers will be actively mindful of World War II for another century. Other agencies, born of war's need, disbanded just as abruptly, trundling into the national archives packing boxes containing millions of pieces of paper and billions of words recounting, if not necessarily *why* it happened, *what* had happened.

A special war-records section of the Bureau of the Budget delivered itself of a thick tome bursting with figures, facts, and quite a few opinions. Discussing war's broad challenges and ramifications, it stated:

In World War II the United States faced the greatest administrative test since its founding. The Government took millions of men from their homes for the armed services, prescribed how much food the housewife might buy, determined how much and what kind of goods were to be produced by its mightiest corporations, and went far toward deciding just where a man might work and what he might receive for his labor. Yet it managed to do these dictatorial things within the framework of the democratic system, and even in the forms and changes of its administrative machinery it preserved the methods of democracy so that the resolutions of tensions proceeded, if not always smoothly, yet directly and firmly.

Modern war is not merely a battle or succession of battles between groups of fighting men. A fighting army is only the cutting edge of a militarized industrial system. A nation's fighting strength depends on how well and to what extent its entire resources have been mobilized and managed toward the ends of war. To accomplish this mobilization and management, a government adapted to the needs of peace must be enlarged and reorganized so that it can assume enormous tasks foreign to its traditions. New departments, new agencies, new offices must be organized and staffed. Policies must be hammered out in unaccustomed areas. In the process the most complex and delicate problems in government and public administration have to be solved.

Problems of wartime administration are not simply problems of the mechanics and procedures of government. The objectives of government, even in time of war, are often in warm dispute and the building of administrative mechanisms must proceed with great urgency in an atmosphere of conflict about what the objectives should be. The evaluation and leadership of public opinion occupies a position of no less significance than administrative expertness. In the American democracy, a government, no matter how wise its judgment may be, cannot for long execute its will arbitrarily against the opposition of substantial blocs of opinion.

The Bureau of the Budget's backward glance was a not very subtle tribute, at least inferentially, to a Democratic Administration, endorsed in a foreword by President Truman. Self-praising as it was, hinting at the reverent touch of the Democratic National Committee, it nonetheless recounted an impressive five-

year record of war production, commencing with defense efforts early in 1941.

The major totals were 297,000 airplanes; 71,000 Navy vessels; 53,000,000 deadweight tons of merchant shipping, or 127,-255 war-built vessels of all types, merchant and naval; 86,000 tanks; 315,000 artillery shells.

The production of nearly half a million Diesel engines—for driving vehicles, locomotives, submarines, and surface craft and for powering many types of machinery—not only was a substantial achievement in itself but foreshadowed their major use in the future. Within a decade, for example, they would virtually displace steam locomotives from the nation's railroads.

There were disappointments. Willow Run, a slow starter which was further fettered by strikes, never came close to its designed potential of 7,800 bombers a year. In somewhat more than three years of production, Willow Run turned out but 8,685 aircraft.

Design faults, under the urgency of worldwide war, cropped up in various types of planes. The wing loading of medium bombers, for example, was a serious aerodynamic ill. With not fully adequate power plants, they were prone to deadly high speed stalls.

Ships, improperly welded, had a distressing affinity for cracking in two. Survivors clung to the stern portion of one Liberty freighter, for example, for two horror-filled days after the remainder of the vessel had been torn off in a North Atlantic gale.

Tanks overheated; their transmissions "froze"; their treads snarled; their guns jammed. The war ended before anyone even drew blueprints for an elementary safety factor: a hatch for escaping in a hurry, if hit or disabled.

Wholesale purchase orders were signed before those responsible had a full opportunity to measure, evaluate, or test their wares. The Navy, for example, bought upwards of a quarter of a million .38 caliber revolvers only to discover that the safety locks were inadequate. The whole lot eventually was recalled and destroyed at the additional cost of several fatalities, which need never have happened in the first place. The faithful Army .45

automatic was substituted. The old-fashioned pistol was almost heavy enough to double for a small boat anchor. But it was safe.

In addition to waste and disruption, greed and graft sapped monetary resources tagged for the war, though—insofar as was discovered—nowhere proportionate to the scandals unearthed in the wake of World War I.

The most notorious case was that involving former Representative Andrew Jackson May, of Kentucky, and two brothers, Henry and Murray Garsson. They were convicted on three counts of bribery and conspiracy to defraud the Government and sent to prison. During a Congressional investigation, preceding the Federal indictment, it was brought out that Henry Garsson, who had been commissioned a brigadier general in the Army's chemical warfare division, and his brother had created "phantom" corporations.

Amid the destruction and disillusion that are the inevitable heritage of war were some positive contributions for the United States, including expansion of the nation's productive capacity, increased physical and social mobility of its citizens, and inroads made in interracial problems. Insularism as it was understood in the thirties dwindled in strength. Men returned to the smallest of communities with tales of the world far beyond.

Wartime advances in medicine and surgery were especially notable. In the winter of 1943-44, an influenza epidemic, centered in the East, closed schools and skyrocketed absenteeism in war plants as it sent an estimated one million citizens—one tenth of them in the nation's capital—to bed. However, though medical men were apprehensive, this was not a return visit of the dread Spanish flu of 1918 that killed more than twenty million humans throughout the world. Doctors now were ready with vaccines, sulfa drugs, and penicillin, which held fatalities to a negligible level.

The health of the generally pampered servicemen remained good, in contrast to their forebears in the AEF. Epidemics during that war—including flu, pneumonia, measles, dysentery, and spinal meningitis—wreaked havoc in the camps. While, for example, syphilis among civilians during World War II soared 30

per cent above prewar incidence, it was down 35 per cent among the Armed Forces. "Miracle" drugs, the issue of contraceptives, and the proclaiming of red-light districts out-of-bounds spear-headed the military's determined assault upon venereal disease.

Biologically Selective Service learned new ABC's about the American male and established specifications and procedures for future needs. General Hershey has summed up:

" . . . the lesson was evident that somewhere between 18 and 26 are the ideal ages for initial mobilization . . . this group should be used to the utmost before those 26 to 35, and that the group above 35, with some exceptions, such as professionals and semi-professionals, should be left to maintain our economy and carry out the national health, safety and interest."

In other words, early middle age for American men has become more secure from the aggressions and perils of the military.

As the nation began to relearn the ways of peace, the reality of America in wartime faded into the shadows of history books to join Yorktown, Appomattox, and San Juan Hill. Huge encampments became the playgrounds of squirrels and other rodents. The control towers of once swarming airfields were soon like buzzard roosts in the wilderness. Sprawling factories stood empty and silent, their broken windows open to the weather, to bats, and to other winged creatures. Nature slowly reclaimed her own.

A flood of the Columbia River in 1948 tore away every vestige of Vanport, Oregon's second largest city. Its 18,500 residents—most of them war veterans and students—fled for their lives, abandoning all belongings. It brought a violent end to one of the home front's more ambitious works.

These "monuments" to the war collapsed, crumbled, rusted, or rotted. Literal ones would take their place—the statuary in city parks and the memorial plaques on village greens, beside county court houses, within the hush of churches and synagogues the length and breadth of the land. Military bases, hospitals, housing developments, town squares, streets, and avenues would bear the names of heroes.

But within the short span of even two decades the plaques would commence to tarnish; street signs would hang askew; and

a new generation would ask in honest wonderment, "Who was he? What was it like then?"

Only the widows, the mothers, and others of close and loving acquaintanceship who stayed home will remember, with the vividness of yesterday.

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